

THE
S U F F E R I N G S
OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST,

WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN PORTUGUESE,

By F. THOMAS OF JESUS,
OF THE ORDER OF THE HERMITS OF ST. AUGUSTIN;

AND NEWLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH.

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C O N T E N T S

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THE
SUFFERINGS
OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST,
IN HIS PASSION.

XXIII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The snares laid against him, for putting him to death.

THE sorrow which those continual contradictions occasioned our Saviour, was also much augmented by the intrigues of the people, the priests, the chief doctors and Pharisees, who endeavoured to surprise him in his words, that they might have some pretence for persecuting him. This was not one of the least of our Saviour's sufferings: many circumstances rendered it very sensible to him, and the prophet speaks only with bitterness of the snares they continually laid against Christ, for destroying him; *He sits in wait with the rich, says he, in secret places, to kill the innocent, whose mouth is full of cursing, and bitterness, and guile: under his tongue, labour and sorrow* (Pf. ix. 28, 29.) *They prepared a snare for my feet; and bowed down my soul. They digged a pit before my face,* (Pf. lvi. 7, 8.) *From unjust men deliver me: who have devised to supplant my steps: the proud have bid a snare for me: they have stretched out ropes for a snare; they have laid a stumbling block for me near the way* (Pf. cxxxix. 5, 6, 7.) *The sorrows of hell have compassed me: the snares of death have prevented me* (Pf. xvii. 6.) And the prophet speaks thus, because all their designs tended only to deprive Christ of life.

They followed him whithersoever he went, that they might lose no occasion of thwarting him. When they saw the people assembled about him, they came athwart him, as St. *Luke* observes, (ix. 53, 54.) and put a thousand questions to him with great importunity: *laying snares for him; and seeking to catch something from his words, that they might accuse him.* The *Saducees* and *Pharisees* appeared sometimes themselves, and sometimes they sent their disciples. Sometimes they dealt with dissimulation, as when they asked him, whether they might dispense themselves with paying tribute to *Cæsar*; and sometimes with clamour, as when they brought before him the woman taken in adultery.

II. There is reason for admiring here their obstinate malice: for seeing all their wiles became unprofitable, that they were often convinced, by their own extorted answers, so far as not to have one word to say, and that thereby they drew upon themselves the contempt of the people, they were not discouraged; and losing all shame, they openly persecuted our Saviour, even unto death, but could never confound him. He gave thanks for it to God his father, exposing the injustice of his enemies: *Thou hast protected me from the assembly of the malignant: from the multitude of them that work iniquity. Because they have sharpened their tongues as a sword: they have bent the bow, a bitter thing, that they may shoot in secret at the immaculate—They have sought iniquities, and have failed searching with scrutiny. Children's arrows are made their wounds, and their tongues are weakened against them* (Ps. lxxiii. 2, &c.) And in another place, he says; *Because they have bid the destruction of their snare for me without cause; in vain have they upbraided my soul. In the snare which they bid, is their foot taken.* (Ps. xxxiv. 7. ix. 16.)

III. This clearly shews, that virtue stands in no need of any thing but itself, for defending itself against malice; it is strong enough when it appears in its true light; he therefore who persecutes it, has no other aim but to disfigure it, by giving it the colour of vice. Behold the tendency of intrigues, cunning and injustice, which are almost the only means of injuring virtue; but which become unprofitable, when it supports itself in its proper colours.

This is a truth which the heathen philosophers have acknowledged, when they said, that the fortress of virtue cannot be carried either by force or surprise; that, as the sun obscures small lights, so virtue surmounts pain and injustice; and that adversity has less power over virtue, than tempests have over the sea. Tempests may indeed put the sea into commotion; but very far from destroying it, they only purify it, and the sea returns to its pristine calmness.



calmness: thus patience, in the end, appeases anger; truth dissipates lies; humility confounds pride; *and the Lord, according to the expression of the royal prophet, will not leave the rod of sinners upon the lot of the just, that the just may not reach their hands to iniquity.* (Pl. cxxiv. 3.)

IV. We have also reaped this advantage from the malice of the *Jews*, as it gave Christ an occasion of revealing many divine secrets to us, which enlightened our faith, kindled in us the love of God, and are the most solid consolation of his servants.

When they accused him of not observing the Sabbath-day, because he healed the sick on that day, he taught us, that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was instituted for man, that man might spend it in the service of God with greater care; and thus he undeceived us, in the vain superstition of the *Jews*, on that account.

When they tempted him, in asking him for some heavenly prodigy, he taught us this terrible truth, that the incredulous, who profit neither by the graces they receive, nor the signs they see, should have no other sign *given them, but the sign of the prophet Jonas* (*Luke xi. 29.*) who, after being three days in the whale's belly, converted the city of *Ninive*, by his preaching: whereby our Saviour denoted his glorious resurrection, and the progress of his gospel. He adds, that *the queen of the South—came from the remote parts of the earth, to bear the wisdom of Solomon*; that he was more than *Jonas* and *Solomon*; and that they believed not in him, (*Matt. xii. 42.*)

When they asked him, whether a married man could put away his wife, he shewed wherein the law of marriage consisted, which had been altered by the interpretation of the *Jews*; and taught them what they had never heard, that chaste persons should *be like the angels of God.*

Being asked, by what power he wrought miracles, he declared his divinity, by saying, the *Messias* was more than a man, since he was the Lord of *David*; though he descended from him according to the flesh.

Being urged concerning the tribute, which the *Jews* paid to *Cesar*, he taught us this excellent maxim, that the means of preserving interior peace, was, to render to God what belongs to God, and to the world what belongs to the world.

When they reproached him, because his disciples fasted not, and washed not their hands before meals, he answered to the first reproach, that it was not customary to fast in *presence of the bridegroom*; because the conversation his disciples had with him, might supply the want of fasting, that is, of great austerities: and to the second, he answered, that one ought to be much more anxious about the purity of the heart, than cleanness of body.

Being accused of eating with sinners, he brought the example of the prodigal son received by his father; of the strayed sheep brought back to the fold by the good shepherd; and of the lost piece of money, sought for so carefully; adding, that mercy was more agreeable to God than sacrifice.

When they brought before him the adulterous woman, to see whether he would condemn her to be stoned, according to the law of *Moses*, or pardon her, contrary to the express prohibition of the law; he gave us this admirable instruction, that to judge well of our neighbour, we must know ourselves; and that he who finds himself guilty, ought not to condemn others but with extreme caution. He was pleased to shew us afterwards, with what facility he pardoned sinners, by saying to that poor woman, these most comfortable words: *neither will I condemn thee; go, and now sin no more.* (*John viii. 11.*)

What shall I say of what he answered those who asked him, which was the greatest commandment of the law? *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest, and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (*Matt. xxii. 37.*) They also proposed to him other artful questions, concerning the resurrection of the dead, miracles, and his own person, which he satisfied in the same manner, for the instruction of his church; thus making the malice of his enemies serviceable to our salvation.

Thus it is, that the servants of God, when they are persecuted, satisfied with the testimony of their own Conscience, ought to labour with fear and love, not in seeking for the means of resisting the wicked, but in reconciling them to God; persevering in the practice of virtue, profiting by the occasions of testifying their fidelity to God; remaining ever faithful imitators of Christ, enemies to his enemies; depositaries of his truth; defenders of his cross; and victorious over the malice of the world.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ, concerning the snares laid against him by his enemies.

O SWEET Jesus, love of my Soul! how can we resist the sweetness of thy spirit? Thou lovest, O amiable Saviour! and art not loved. Thou shinest, O divine light, and art not known. Thou receivest all, O source of heavenly blessings! and we come not to thee. Thou seekest us, O life of my soul! Thou askest, as a favour, that we would give thee our hearts, and we reject thee, and fly from thee. How comes this, O divine Jesus? is there any thing hateful to be found in thee? or rather, what can be found without thee, and out of thee, which deserves to be loved? but, O my God! let not our ingratitude provoke thee.

Remember that thou hast said, that there are *twelve hours of the day* (John xi. 9.) thou mayest give me one of them for knowing and loving thee. Begin by this, although it comes very late, and perhaps may be the last of my life. Since I have been so unhappy as to spend the others without loving thee, may I begin at least now like those, who after spending the whole day without doing any thing, came in the evening to labour in thy vineyard, and satisfied thee notwithstanding; because none but those that refuse to come, are displeasing to thee. Forget therefore what is past, O my God! receive me this moment into the number of thy servants. Let my heart love thee, my spirit adore thee, and my whole interior embrace thee.

II. When shall I be able to say with truth, as thy apostle did; *Who shall separate me from the love of God?* (Rom. viii. 35.) But if I love thee truly, why shall I not be able to say it with truth? No, Lord! the fear of death shall not separate me from thee, since thou art my life; nor the love of this life; for I am quite ready to lose it for thee; nor the powers of heaven, because thou art more powerful than they; nor things present, because they pass away; nor things to come, because I love nothing in them but thee alone; nor tribulation, because thou comfortest me; nor anguish, because thou dilatest my heart: nor hunger, because thou fillest me; nor poverty, because thou enrichest me; nor dangers, because thou securest me; nor persecution, because thou protectest me; nor sword or torments, because they are sweet to me, on account of thy love; nor slavery, because I shall find true freedom in thee; nor freedom itself, because I desire to be a slave to thy love; nor creatures, because they are nothing before thee; nor the vicissitudes of this world; nor the wiles of my enemies; nor my own miseries; because thou changest all these evils into so many blessings for me.

III. I

III. If thou art for me, O my God! who shall be against me? If thou hast given thyself to me with that unbounded charity, why wilt thou not give me all things with thee? By loving thee, I am strong, patient, and meek; I believe all things, hope for all things, am all things, expect all blessings, and avoid all evils. For by loving thee, I possess thee; and by possessing thee, I am in want of nothing. By loving thee, I am a man, I am an angel, I am happy, I am dead to sin, and I live only for thee. Without thy love, what good can I have? and what evil have I not! I have but one thing to regret, O my Saviour! it is for having lived so long without loving thee. But after all, this is the sorrow of a living man: for when I feel it not, I am as one that is dead. Grant, O divine Jesus! that I may be contrite with sorrow, for not having loved thee, in order to be inflamed with love when I begin to love thee. Enlighten my eyes, that I may see thy meekness, goodness, and charity; and that, being charmed with thy infinite beauty, I am become insensible to every thing else. This is what thou expectest of me; therefore thou bearest with me, and waitest for me. May that happy moment come then, O Lord! wherein I shall begin to love thee for ever!

IV. How much is he to be lamented who loves not thee, O my Saviour! He lives only for his own misery and ruin. He is foolish, because he is governed by himself, and not by thee. He is more than sick, because he hopes he can be healed without thee; and more than dead, because he imagines he can live without thee. What do I say, O my God! Who can express the unhappy state he is in? What worse can happen to him than to resist thee, and to seek for something to be blamed in thee?

How deplorable is the misery of the human heart, when it is deprived of thy love! It endeavours to obscure thee, O eternal light! to accuse thee, O divine purity! and to deceive thee, O infinite wisdom! It would oblige thee to retract, O immutable truth! and would surprise thee in thy words, O increated word! Why shall I seek to penetrate further into thy amorous heart, O my Jesus! is it not sufficient for me to believe, that thou knowest the blindness of the *Jews*, and bearest with it; that thou remainest in silence, and permittest every one to treat thee as he pleases?

Thou seest all the thoughts of those ungrateful people, their hatred to thy person, their attempts against thy virtue, their artifices against thy innocence, and their designs against thy wisdom. Thou seest who they are, against whom they rebel, what makes them do so, and what end they propose to themselves; thou beholdest them, and art silent; and sufferest all, O divine patience! O goodness,
only

only worthy of being loved! for what is wanting thee, O divine Jesus! to make thyself be loved by every one? thou art a constant, faithful, meek, patient, generous, and compassionate friend, industrious in converting all things into good, and full of infinite other perfections which I know not.

V. I adore thee, O divine heart, ocean of all blessings, continual source of mercies, furnace of love and treasure of sovereign happiness! *In peace itself I will sleep and rest; because thou, O Lord! hast singularly settled me in hope* (Ps. iv. 9, 10.) O that those miserable people had never laid snares against thee, but for drawing thee to them! What pleasure wouldst thou have taken in discovering thy divine secrets to them, had they only examined thy words to penetrate into the depth of them! How willingly wouldst thou have allowed thyself to have been deprived of all, had they sought only thy blessings! It is thy custom, O Lord! to do so; and it would seem that thou lovedst to be deceived. For I call thee, and thou comest; though thou knowest I shall soon forsake thee. I beg thy pardon, thou grantest me it, and acceptest my resolution of sinning no more; though thou knowest I shall sin again. Thou consentest to the covenant I make with thee, though thou seest I am soon to break it, and thus thou relievest on me; because thou continually expectest the hour when I shall at last give myself to thee, never to forsake thee more.

VI. But who has used most stratagems, O divine Jesus! men for surprising thee, or thou for gaining them? How miserable am I! is it possible for me to be so weak a creature, and that thou shouldst use so many endeavours for subjecting me to thee? The Jews miserable and terrestrial as they are, presume to attack thy divine virtue, against which they cannot prevail: and thou, O Lord! being what thou art, why dost thou not subdue me at once, me who am but dust and ashes? How can I escape the nets of thy charity, which I find spread on every side for catching me? There are so many of them in tribulation, in temptation, in thy instructions, in the menaces of thy justice, in the gifts of thy mercy, upon earth, in heaven, and in hell; and I avoid them all. But, alas! what shall I avoid, foolish that I am? Whence comes it that my miseries stop and hinder me from falling into those amiable snares?

Break my bonds, O Lord! that I may fall into thine, and then I will sacrifice to thee a host of praise, and I will invoke thy holy name (Psal. cxv. 8.) But how can they be broken, O thou salvation of my soul! It is true thou layest snares for me every where; but thou wouldst have me fall into them voluntarily; because thou wilt not have

have constrained love; and when it is constrained, it is not love. Break thou thyself therefore, O my God! the chains which keep me bound to the flesh and the world; and *I will voluntarily sacrifice to thee*, and love thee with all my freedom, (Psal. liii. 8.) For though I freely love the things which separate me from thee, the habit of loving them forms in me so strong a chain, that even when I see good and approve it, I depart not from evil. I desire thee, O Lord! but I do not desire thee perfectly; because I desire something with thee, which I desire not for thee. Nothing but thy grace can break this chain, deliver me from myself, and transform me into thee. Accomplish thy work, and grant that I may become for ever the slave of thy divine love.

A THANKSGIVING to CHRIST

For the truths he taught us whilst his enemies were laying snares against him.

I Return thee a thousand thanks, O source of all blessings! not only because thou offerest me all those thou possessest, but also because thou drawest good out of evil itself for my salvation. Mayest thou be blessed eternally for that infinite love; which, instead of punishing thy enemies for all the snares they had laid for thee, became for me a source of heavenly consolations, salutary instructions, and divine truths; for enlightening me, and drawing me to thee. Grant, O Lord! that I may comprehend them, and adore them; imprint them in my heart, that it may love thee with all its strength, O my only and sovereign good.

II. I adore thee, O peaceable king! who wouldst neither govern me by the wisdom of *Solomon*, nor terrify me by the threatenings of *Jonas*, nor dazzle me by the splendor of any worldly grandeur; but hast drawn me by a most divine wisdom, by infinite riches, by an eternal kingdom, and by the charms of thy love. Thou art more than *Solomon*, because no earthly affection can make thee change, and the interior peace thou givest, is full of a most heavenly consolation. Thou art more than *Solomon*, because thy treasures are inexhaustible, and thy glory immortal. Thou art truly more than *Jonas*; the vanquisher of death; since it was only by thee that he appeased the storm, converted sinners, and received the penitents. Permit not those graces, O Lord! to be instruments of
my

my condemnation; grant I may love them, be faithful to them in this life, and receive the recompence of them in the other.

III. I adore thee, O most pure Lamb! spouse of chaste souls, wean my heart from earthly affections, that I may love that angelic purity; and because I cannot arrive, but by the gift of thy grace, at a happiness to which thou hast said all do not attain, do thou thyself oppose my enemies, kindle in me the fire of thy charity, draw my heavy and earthly heart by those spiritual chains, purify it from every low and mean desire, and make it worthy of thee.

IV. I adore thee, O prince of peace! guide and saviour of sinners! because thou hast vouchsafed to be their pastor. Infinite thanks be given to thee, for having opened to publicans and sinners the entrance of thy kingdom; I am of that number, O Lord! leave me not behind, but bring me to thee, and separate me from myself. May I love thee, embrace thee, and acknowledge thee for my sovereign Lord, and only happiness.

V. I adore thee with all my heart, O father of the world to come! but with a sincere faith, and not with the artifice and dissimulation of the *Pharisees*. I acknowledge thee for the master of pure truth, for the divine light which conducts us to God, and for the faithful spouse of our souls, who without respect of persons, openest thy heart to all those that are willing to enter into it. Teach me to give to the world, to *Cæsar*, and to my neighbour, what thy law prescribes; and to thee, O my happiness! this soul upon which thou hast engraven thy image: as it was made only for thee, it ought to be wholly thine. Deliver me from the unjust tributes which I would willingly have paid to thy enemies; that I may no longer depend on any but thee, O my God! who art my lawful Lord.

VI. I adore thee, O true spouse of my soul! do not suffer it ever to abandon itself to other loves. Thou art my whole happiness and glory; I ought to love nothing but thee. And I desire only thee. Give me that wedding robe, wherewith thou requirest those to be clothed that come to the nuptials of the lamb. Hide not thy face from me. Let my ears continually hear thy call; that I may never hear the serpent's voice, that seeks to corrupt my fidelity.

VII. I adore thee! O divine wisdom! who hast taught me that good and evil comes from the heart. Thy most pure eyes are never deceived by appearances, they penetrate the bottom and truth of things: *Create a clean heart in me, O God! and renew a right spirit*
in

in my bowels. (Pf. l. 12.) This is as easy to thee as it is difficult to me; thy goodness is greater than my obduracy, and thy light stronger than my blindness. Shine, O divine sun! in the dark cell of my heart, and make that fountain of living water spring up therein, which ascends unto thee.

VIII. I adore thee, O merciful father! always ready to receive thy fugitive and prodigal children. I am not worthy to look up to heaven, nor to be received into the number of thy children; allow me only to be the lowest of thy domestics, and I shall be content.

IX. I adore thee, O shepherd of strayed sheep! which thou seekest in their flight with so much trouble, I am gone further astray than others, give joy to heaven, by bringing me back again, and saving me, O faithful companion of sinners! enter into this poor cottage, that salvation and peace may enter into it with thee; shew it thy mercy, since thou lovest mercy better than sacrifice.

X. I adore thee, O certain refuge of the miserable! As thou softenedst, by the sweetness of thy words, those that came to apprehend thee, and madest them confess, that *never man spoke like thee*, (John vii. 46.) so change the bad dispositions of my heart, that I may know the truth; and since thou didst not condemn the adulterous woman when she was brought before thee; receive me also, O Lord! for I know that with thee there is nothing to be found but pardon, comfort, salvation, grace, and love.

XI. Let thy enemies lay for me what snares they please; let them employ whatever the blackest malice can invent for hurting me; I am sure it will be only my own fault if thou dost not turn it to the profit of my soul. What have I then to fear, O my God and my strength! even when I am assaulted with temptations, when I feel the resistance of corrupt nature, and when I abhor the renouncing all things, for following thee with more freedom? Shall I find any one that can and will convert all things for me into good, as thou dost, O divine Jesus! No evil was done thee but what became for me a source of blessings; thou sweetenest what was most bitter therein; thou makest water issue out of the rocks; thou calmest the most enraged sea; and drawest life from the very bosom of death. I cannot therefore fear any thing but from myself. Dilate this heart, O eternal charity! that I may cast myself, with confidence, love, and resignation, into that ocean of mercy, which opens its bosom for me; that I may abide in the paternal arms of that loving providence which governs me; and that I may repose therein, possess thee therein, and be for ever possessed of thee therein.

O most

O most pure mother, dispensatrix of heavenly treasures; you whose consolation and life was the Lord, and who ascended by him to that degree of perfection and glory, which you now possess; draw me to you, fortify me in his love, since he is my hope and happiness. Blessed spirits! inebriated with the delights of God's house, procure me some drops of those celestial waters, to sprinkle the dry and barren ground of my heart; that having once tasted of those rivers of pleasure, I may continually sigh after the fountain, 'till I possess it at last with you, for all eternity. *Amen.*

XXIV. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The ingratitude of the Jews.

THERE is so great a connexion betwixt sins, that every vice seems to be the origin of all others. Hence it is that the saints say sometimes, that pride is the root of all evil, sometimes that it is disobedience; there are some that affirm it is the irregular love of ourselves; others that it is envy; and some that it is ingratitude. St. Bernard calls this last vice, *the enemy of the soul, the destruction of merits, the dissipation of virtues, and the loss of all graces; a burning wind which dries up the fountain of piety, the dew of mercy, and the channel of divine communications.* Thus it is, he attributes all evils to ingratitude. But though the Jews had many others, one of which alone was capable of ruining them, it is certain that ingratitude was one of the most dangerous; since it was fortified by all others, and since it rendered them at the same time more odious and incurable. However it be, we may affirm that it gave our Lord, for many years, such pains as required an invincible patience.

II. It is easy to comprehend at first view, how troublesome it is to meet with nothing but bad treatment, from those we have heaped benefits upon. The priests and chiefs of the people, were not only the most ungrateful, but lest it should be thought that they were obliged to him, they defamed him every where, and their hatred increased in proportion to his favours. Others that followed him in view of some temporal advantage, withdrew when he spoke not to them according to their desires; as those did whom he had miraculously fed with five loaves and two fishes. For having designed to make him king, in hopes of living pleasantly under his reign, they abandoned him, whenever they heard him speak of that heavenly bread,

bread, which he was to give to the world. Some after having been healed, not only did not thank him for it, as the nine lepers; but many even of those who had followed him, became his persecutors.

In fine, those miserable people whom he had prevented with his favours, after having received him with great rejoicings and acclamations, and having acknowledged him as sent from God; after having wished to touch only the hem of his garment for their cure, and having met together in a crowd about him, from all parts adjacent, they joined his enemies, preferred to him a murderer, required that he should be crucified, and led him themselves to the place of execution.

But what can never be sufficiently admired, is that our Saviour knowing their intentions, and foreseeing their ingratitude, ceased not to instruct them in his divine truths, and to bestow on them a thousand blessings, so far as to give *Judas* himself, that betrayed him, the marks of his tenderness, and to restore to *Malchus*, that was come to seize him, the ear which *St. Peter* had cut off.

III. Human laws declare that ingratitude is a lawful cause to parents for disinheriting their children, and to masters for refusing a reward to their servants. It destroys ancient friendship in such a manner, that those who are afterwards reconciled to one another, give no other reason for it, but that it is the nature of virtue to forget evil, and to do good even to those who are most unworthy thereof. For nothing can excuse ingratitude, the more one endeavours to justify it, the more insupportable it becomes; and the best excuse is to acknowledge that we have none. But whatever may be done, human friendships are almost continually weakened thereby; and there is nothing but the divine love which with Christ was filled, that can increase by ingratitude: for far from being extinguished thereby, or changed into hatred, as it commonly happens amongst men, it became the more ardent in him. The ingratitude of the *Jews*, instead of shutting up the heart of Jesus, made the treasures of his wisdom and mercy flow with greater abundance; and those who afterwards acknowledged their fault, were received with as much goodness as if they had never been ungrateful.

IV. But we who are born within the pale of the church, who are nourished in the bosom of the faith and charity of Christ, who see the wonderful effects of his power, hear the divine truths, by which he has taught us the way to heaven, and can *draw waters in joy out of the saviour's fountains*, (*Isai. xii. 3.*) are we less ungrateful than
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the Jews? We reject all those graces, run after the deceitful image of earthly pleasures, with as great earnestness as if they were solid and eternal, and live in an entire forgetfulness of what we owe to God. We dare even present ourselves before his majesty in this state, and stay in his house with as much tranquility, as if we were faithful to him. We go into his temple, as if he saw nothing but good in us, and we exercise his patience no less, than the ungrateful Jews did that crucified him.

Divines teach that the sin into which we relapse is greater than the first; because there is an ingratitude in committing again a fault which had been pardoned us. What then must those be into which we still daily fall, after God has pardoned us them a thousand times?

If we add thereto the abuse we make of temporal goods, which have been given us for meriting heaven, and which we so often make use of for deserving hell; the contempt of spiritual goods; the negligence in serving God, in preserving grace, in making good use of time, in corresponding with the divine inspirations; whilst we are wholly employed in the cares of this world, and our passions and rude pleasures have more power over us than the infinite majesty, the greatness, truth, eternity, power, and glory of God, by whose goodness we live, and whose severity we cannot avoid, our ingratitude will at last become to us an abyss of woe and perdition. There will no longer any hope remain for us, but in the infinite charity of Christ, who foreseeing the hardness of our hearts, has vouchsafed to be crucified for ungrateful wretches; and is still ready to forget our ingratitude, if we return to him sincerely. But let us remember that this patience which bears with us so long, may be turned into a just wrath; and that without it we should have been already lost.

V. The mercy which God shews in regard of us, is not only to us a matter of comfort, but also an example given us by him, that we may do good to those who are ungrateful towards us; and that the obligation we have to him, may have more power over us than our own resentments. For this reason he commands us to love our enemies: for if you love them, says he, *that love you, what thanks is due to you? for even sinners love those that love them. And if you do good to them that do good to you, what thanks is due to you? for even sinners do this—But love your enemies: do good, and lend, not hoping for any thing thereby; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the most high: for he is kind to the ungrateful and to the wicked.* (Luke vi. 32, 33, 35.)

The very heathens have owned, that he who refuses to oblige an ungrateful person, does more injury to himself than to him, because he loses the merit of doing good, which is much more precious than the benefit he refuses. By doing good to a man, we do not make him more wicked, perhaps we even make him better; but by refusing him a favour, we become always less good; and because another is ungrateful, we will not be generous; yet it is certain that it is not the part of true virtue to neglect doing good, because others do evil.

If we consider the blessings we daily receive from God, notwithstanding our ingratitude, we shall have no need of other motives for obliging our neighbour, though he behave ill towards us: besides, to act christianly we must do good to men only for the love of God, without expecting any acknowledgment from them. As they easily forget the good that is done them, we lose it when we do it for them: which made the wise man say, (*Wisd. xvi. 29.*) *that the hope of the ungrateful shall melt as winter ice, and shall run off as unprofitable water*; because when he is out of necessity, he forgets his benefactor, and attributes to himself the favours he has received from another, according to these words of *Ecclesiasticus*, (*xxix. 21.*) *a sinner counteth the goods of his surety to himself; and unthankful in mind will forsake him that delivered him.*

He torments himself, as a philosopher says, by the benefits he receives: he hates the benefit, because he has received it; and lessens the value of it, because he ought to return it; but therein he injures only himself, and his unworthiness still heightens the merit of his benefactor. Malice always drinks up the greatest part of its own poison; but this poison is not like that of serpents: for serpents carry theirs about them for hurting others, and are not incommoded thereby; whereas the ungrateful man is punished by his own ingratitude.

Since the example of God and human reason induce us to oblige the ungrateful, it is sufficient to add here, that there is scarce any thing in this world more worthy of a holy emulation, than to return good for evil; because of the interior graces with which God always fills those who suffer evil by doing good; and who cease not to do good, although the receivers refuse to acknowledge it. Experience what I say, and you will find the truth of it.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ bearing with the Jews ingratitude.

IS it possible, O my Saviour! that there is no sort of affliction but what thou hast been pleased to suffer; and that after so many pains endured for us, thou still sufferest men to be ungrateful, so far as to make use of thy own benefits for offending thee? Blessed be the love which made thee support such an ingratitude. Let me see, O sweet Jesus! the secrets of thy heart. There never was any so sensible of ingratitude; and yet that vice which ought to have dried up the fountain of thy blessings, makes them flow abundantly even upon those who refuse them. I adore thee, O divine heart! alas! who can deserve our love, our praises, adorations, and services; but thou, who art rich in love, in mercy, in benefits, and in patience? We can neither limit their extension, nor exhaust their riches.

Thou seest, O Lord! the extreme ingratitude with which people endeavour to destroy thy favours, and to return thee nothing, for so many blessings, but injuries, contempts, torments, and a cruel death. The sick whom thou hast healed, and the ignorant whom thou hast instructed, rise up against thee: and that source of goodness is not drained, nor that furnace of charity extinguished; far from depriving those ungrateful people of the hopes of receiving new favours, thou still officest them some every day.

What can they desire when they possess thee, O source of all good! with what pretence can they cover their ingratitude, when they reject thee? When they have not whereof to eat, thou fillest them. If they want any thing, thou stayest not till they ask it of thee, that thou mayest give it to them. They find in thee the physician and the remedy both of soul and body. Thou calmest tempests, castest out devils, healest the sick, raisest the dead to life, teachest the way to heaven, pardonest sins, and takest the punishment thereof upon thyself.

II. The queen of the south might well have said to thee, with much more reason than to Solomon, (3 Kings. x. 8.) *blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants, which stand before thee always, and hear thy wisdom—the Lord hath loved Israel for ever, and hath appointed thee king to do judgment and justice.* That queen saw nothing in Solomon but exterior and limited qualities which she admired; and she would have found in thee a divine power, a divine wisdom, and a divine love; and if Israel was beloved of God,

God, because *Solomon* governed it, how much more happy ought it to have esteemed itself in having thee for its king?

Nevertheless, those ungrateful hearts are insensible of that happiness; they rather chuse what is most contemptible on earth, than thy graces and thyself; they persecute thee continually, and will not be content till they have put thee to death. Their streets, houses, and fields, are still full of thy benefits, and they cannot endure thee. Why dost thou not deprive them of life, health, and all the blessings they have received from thee, O my God! since they have no sense of them, and are so blind as to despise them? I adore the goodness at the same time with which thou sufferest their repulses, and the grief thou hast on that account. Open me thy heart, O merciful father! and let that source of love and light flow upon mine, that I may know the enormity of my ingratitude, by the excess of thy charity.

O how true is what thou hast said, O Lord! that those who will not receive thee; thee who in the name of the father comest to them, full of grace and truth, will receive another with open arms, who shall come in his own name, to seduce and destroy them. Since they prefer themselves to thee, love the promises of the world more than thine, and the accomplishment of their own carnal desires, more than the communication of thy divine blessings, they shall find eternal death, in the midst of the life which thou bringest them. Thou seest their evils, and art sensibly touched therewith, whilst they suffer them without concern. May thy infinite love be praised and glorified for ever!

III. But alas, O Lord! when I admire thy patience in supporting the ingratitude of the *Jews*, have I not reason to weep before thee, for my own past and present miseries, and to discover to thee my old wounds, which have so often broke out again, and which thou alone canst cure? Though I have not seen thee in thy mortal flesh, I believe that all thou didst on earth, is for me an inestimable treasure of spiritual blessings. For thou wast born for me alone, as well as for all others; and as thy person is of an infinite dignity, the virtue of thy divine works can never be exhausted. In thy actions, words, and merits, I find my support, my direction, my food, and life: from thence it is I hope for, and believe what I do not see.

Behold what thou givest me, O my God! but if I think on what I return thee, how shall I presume to appear before thee? What ought I not to fear, O Lord! if thy mercies rise up against me; if thy benefits condemn me, if thy whole goodness confounds
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me, and if what thou hast prepared for my remedy becomes to me a mortal poison? What service have my eyes, tongue, and ears, my whole body, understanding, and will, my memory, soul, and all that I am, rendered thee? What has my gratitude been to thee for heaven, earth, and elements, for my being, life, and all the temporal blessings which thou hast bestowed on me; or rather how have I not abused them, in offending thee with an extreme ingratitude?

Ah! if I consider that multitude of spiritual blessings which thou hast given me, and which thou hast promised me, which I have lost and neglected; what ought I not to fear, O my God! What shall become of me if thou enterest into judgment against me! But what should already have become of me, if thou hadst not regarded me with that same mercy, which made thee die for the ungrateful?

When thou didst visit me by the sweetness of thy presence; when my soul was charmed with thy beauty; when every thing that removed it from thee, appeared insupportable to it; and when it suffered with such great pain, the necessity of satisfying the wants of the body; what did it behold in thee, O Lord! to abandon thee so soon, to forget thee entirely, to give way to other loves, and to reject thy truths, after relishing them with so pure a joy?

Thou lost none of thy attractives, O eternal beauty! when I fled from thee: and the things that I sought after besides thee, ceased not to be vile and perishable. What reason had I then to forsake thee for them? for I found not in them those chaste delights which are enjoyed with thee.

When afterwards, touched with a sense of my wanderings, I returned to thee, thou didst receive, comfort, and pardon me: I then knew that thou wast my only refuge, and that I could not be saved but by adhering to thee. What therefore have I since found in creatures which separated me from thee, to seek them still in offending thee? How miserable am I, O my God!

IV. But my misery will appear much greater, if besides the benefits which are common to me with many others, I call to mind the particular graces which I have received from thee, the sins thou hast pardoned me, the temptations thou hast made me overcome, and the dangers from which thou hast delivered me; and when I confess before thee the particular ingratitude I have fallen into after so many favours, my heart is so full of sorrow and confusion for it,

that I reckon all other miseries of my life as nothing. *To thee only have I sinned, O my God!* and I ought to have loved nothing but thee alone. *I have done evil before thee,* and confess it in the sight of the whole world; that thy mercy may triumph over my ingratitude. *I was conceived in iniquities,* for that reason it is I am so prone to commit them, and thou art so easy to pardon them. *Thou hast loved truth;* thou hast always fulfilled thy promises, and I cease not to violate those by new sins which I have made thee so often. *The hidden things of thy wisdom thou hast made manifest to me,* which found out the means of elevating me by thy humiliations, of enriching me by thy merits, and of defacing my ingratitude by thy sufferings. Thus the only confidence I have left, is, that *thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. To my hearing thou shalt give joy and gladness, and the humbled bones shall rejoice.* (Ps. l. 6—10.)

O powerful queen of heaven! in whom grace was never unprofitable, and who hath acquired by your fidelity an immense treasure of celestial blessings, God has been pleased that you should be our refuge; help me; assist me, an ungrateful person unworthy of every thing that is good. May I return into the house and friendship of our Lord, who rendered you so perfect; and may I never forget his mercies. Happy citizens of heaven, who are filled with blessings in assurance never to lose them, have compassion on the inconsistency and dangers wherein we live in this place of miseries; obtain me a continual remembrance, and an earnest desire of the happiness which ye possess, that being for ever disgusted with the pleasures of this world, I may sigh no longer after any thing but what renders you eternally happy. *Amen.*

XXV. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

The earnest desire he had of his passion, and the human fear he had thereof.

THE Son of God in becoming man, chiefly proposed to himself three things, as the end of all his labours; his father's glory; the establishment of the law of grace; and the redemption of mankind. But because the glory of God was to be made known to the whole world, by the death of our Saviour; that the law of grace, which he had published, was to be confirmed by his sufferings; and that the redemption of mankind was to be consummated by the

the effusion of his blood: the desire he had of seeing his father glorified, the new law established, and men redeemed, was so ardent that one may say, without any fear of exaggerating, that that desire was the greatest of all his torments.

The zeal of God's house, with which Christ was devoured, urged him interiorly to accomplish his work; represented continually to him what he had to suffer; and gave him no repose. True it is, our Saviour was pleased it should be so, that that pain continuing the longer with him, it might be more full of grace and merit for us; but he was pleased also to make us comprehend thereby, that so painful a death, far from being the effect of chance, or of the sole malice of men, proceeded from a profound wisdom, and a charity which could suffer no delay.

For we must not judge of the length of Christ's sufferings, by the time of his passion, which lasted only about twenty hours. He not only felt the pain and ignominy thereof at that time, but they were present to his mind during the whole course of his life; and his sacred humanity was continually possessed therewith.

II. He expressed his desire and fear of it, by these words so full of love: (*Luke xii. 50.*) *I am to be baptised with a baptism: and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* He also calls his passion a baptism, when he asked the children of Zebedee, who desired to have the first places in his kingdom, saying; *Can you drink the cup which I am to drink, and be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am to be baptised* (*Mark. x. 38.*) If these terms of *cup* and *baptism* denote any thing agreeable, 'tis because our Saviour's love could find no comfort but in that cup, and in that bath of blood where he was to wash away our iniquities.

The holy scripture is full of the praises of that precious blood: it says it is the *blood of the new Testament*, (*Matt. xxvi. 28.*) in which we shall be purified, and that it intercedes for us with God: that it was *by his own blood* Christ once entered into the sanctuary, having obtained for us an *eternal redemption*: that as in the old law without the effusion of blood there was no redemption, so in the new law how much more shall the blood of Christ—*cleanse our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God*, (*Heb. ix. 12. xxii. 13.*) And as Christ was pleased to be baptized in *Jordan*, in order to give to the waters the virtue of sanctifying our souls, he was also pleased to be washed in his own blood, to teach us, that that blood is not a sign of wrath and death, but a fountain of life and grace.

III. When he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, life to the dead, and saw the people full of joy and surprise, he wished that all nations of the world would receive in their souls, by the virtue of his blood, in a spiritual manner, the graces that so small a number of people had received in their bodies: and his heart desired, with a holy impatience, that those blessings might be communicated to all men. He spoke thereof continually, and on every occasion, because he was wholly taken up about it.

Considering the ingratitude of the *Jews*, he foretold, that the *Gentiles* should take possession of those blessings which the *Jews* had refused. Speaking of drinking and eating, he commonly fell upon the participation of his body and blood, which was to give life to the world. Sometimes he discoursed of sheep which he was to bring into his fold, from all parts of the world; sometimes of those who were to come from the east and west, to sit down at his table. He exhorted his disciples to lift up their eyes, to view the fields already white and ready for harvest. He affirmed, that when he should be elevated on the cross, he would draw all to him, and neglected no opportunity of expressing his extreme desire of our salvation.

IV. Thus when he said, *I came to cast fire upon the earth, and will I but that it be kindled?* (Luke xii. 49.) He knew very well that that fire could only be kindled by the baptism of his blood; and seeing that baptism delayed, he cried out with a sigh, *How am I straitened till it be accomplished!* What zeal! what love! what tenderness! What do men think of, not to converse continually with a God so good, a friend so affectionate, and a father so charitable, who, forgetting himself, is wholly taken up with our necessities.

Behold here the mirror in which we may discover, whether we be far from, or near to God, and whether our views be pure and disinterested. For the ardour with which he desired the accomplishment of our salvation, rendered every moment he had to wait, painful and tedious to him; although there was none of them but what was full of an infinite treasure of merits for us. This thought urged him continually; and we, for whom he endured those anguishes, allow ourselves to be carried away by quite contrary desires, though we know how much they displease him, and that it was for plucking them out of our hearts, that he was pleased to suffer death. I even presume to say, that if the greatest part of men would look back on their past lives, they would scarcely find, in so great a number of years, one single day wherein they have laboured for their eternal salvation, with as great application as they have every day for what occasions the loss of their souls.

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How foolish are those that put off all the care of their eternity till the last hour of their life, and who imagine that amidst the terrors of God's judgments, before whom they must shortly appear, at the sight of the punishments of hell, into which they will be ready to fall, amidst the pains which separate soul and body, they can think as they ought on the affair of their salvation! How shall they at their death love him with all their heart, whom they have not loved during their life, and without the love of whom they cannot be saved? Christ, the faithful friend of our souls, did not act in this manner; he had appointed an hour wherein he was to die for us; thought of it every moment; and died daily, because that hour came not sooner. We are no less obliged to him for the good will he had to die, than for his death itself. We ought to consider the desires with which his heart was oppressed, as to many deaths suffered for us: for he continually renewed in himself the remembrance and desire of that bloody bath, wherein he was to be plunged for the salvation of mankind.

VI. That love of the cross occasioned him also another pain, which was the natural fear and continual sense of those sufferings he was to undergo. The same love which made him chuse them, rendered them always present to his mind; and in spite of the horror nature had thereof, he earnestly desired them.

Men of courage, though they know the danger, cease not upon occasion to seek for the most dangerous posts, to shew their valour: and the natural fear with which they are often seized, at taking up arms, does not hinder them from fighting bravely, nor from overcoming their enemy, after having overcome their fear; but it continues not long in them; whereas our Saviour's holy humanity felt it always: for he was all his life divided, as one may say, between the terror of torments, which he foresaw, even to the least circumstance, and the desire of accomplishing the work of our redemption, by the death of the cross. Which made him say, after having complained of the delay of that bloody baptism, *I came not to bring peace but the sword*, (Matt. x. 34) to cut off every thing that might soften my pain, and to fight amongst the pains and ignominies of a cruel death; *I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled*, (Luke xii. 49.) and that it may increase in the hearts of men, by the endeavours they shall make for resisting every thing that can deprive them of the true blessings? Thus they will follow the ways I have shewn them, and they will express their love to me, in the same manner as I have expressed mine to them.

VII. Behold here an excellent instruction for the servants of God, who interiorly urged by his love to undertake great things,

grieve to see themselves stopped by the infirmity of nature. Our Lord, who designs to erect a great edifice upon so weak a foundation, has ordained, that natural infirmity, to which the will does not consent; cannot hurt the perfection of love, but serves even sometimes to augment it; because the sense of human misery, pains, and afflictions, when the mind preserves it vigour, makes us sigh more earnestly after the freedom of God's children, and desire continually to be able without impediment, to give ourselves to him, as he has given himself to us.

Of the TRANSFIGURATION.

THE fear and desire which the son of God had of suffering, clearly appeared in the mystery of his transfiguration; wherein he was pleased to shew those that love him, and are crucified for his love, a ray of that glory which he prepares for them. For eight days after he had declared to his disciples, that the royal way of the cross was that whereby it behoved him to walk; and that he would only acknowledge those for his disciples, that should bear their cross after him; burning with the desire of being soon fastened to it, he transfigured himself before them, in order to dilate their hearts by a view of his glory, and to give them a taste before-hand of the blessings which are hidden in the cross.

He chose for the witnesses of that mystery three of his apostles; *James*, who was to be the first in suffering martyrdom; *Peter*, who was to die on the cross; and *John*, who after seeing his master expire, was to live only by pure love. He retired with them unto mount *Thabor*! and being arrived there he prayed, to teach us that there is more force in prayer, for making us bear the cross, than weakness in the human heart, for fearing it; that prayer purifies our love, and renders the earthly man wholly spiritual and celestial.

Our Saviour, during his prayer, allowed a ray of the glory of his soul, which he had restrained till then, that he might be capable of suffering, to spread itself over his body for some time: *and his face shined as the sun; and his garments became white as snow* (Matt. xvii. 2.) If a mortal body be capable of so great a splendor, what will be the glory of a soul that has lived on earth in the continual practice of divine love?

II. There appeared on each side of him *Moses* and *Elias*, whom he had chosen amongst all the saints of the old law, to be witnesses of his love and sufferings. He chose *Elias*, who after being persecuted all his life by the wicked, for God's cause, was assumed into heaven, in a fiery chariot, to teach those that suffer, that they shall not find the end of their sufferings, and their true consolation, but in the fire of the divine love, which alone can elevate them above the thoughts and miseries of this world. And he chose *Moses*, who being accustomed to converse familiarly with God, and to live in his presence, despised the delights of *Pharaoh's* house, and chose rather to be afflicted with God's people, than to enjoy the pleasures of so corrupt a court.

Behold what the divine love performs in a faithful soul! it deprives him by degrees of the pleasure of every thing that can fix him to the world, and accomplishes his purification by sufferings.

III. Christ being thus placed betwixt those two faithful lovers of the cross, who can express what their sentiments were, when they beheld him clothed with our flesh, whom they had so ardently desired? They saw with their corporeal eyes, the beauty of his countenance, and with the eyes of faith, the purity and beatitude of his soul, totally burning with love, and full of the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

But though they were charmed with the wonders they discovered in him, they spoke to him only of the excess of his passion and of his decease which he was to undergo at Jerusalem, (*Luke ix. 31.*) being persuaded they could speak of nothing more agreeable to him. And as our Saviour himself often entertained his disciples about his reproaches and cross, which were the objects of his most ardent desires; so these two prophets, being charmed with his interior and exterior beauty, and with his infinite charity, spoke to him of nothing but the thorns, wherewith he was to be crowned, the wounds with which he was to be disfigured, the reproaches with which he was to be loaded, the tears he was to shed, the torments he was to undergo, and the triumph of his love in his death on the cross.

They observed the earnestness of his heart after sufferings, and the perfect submission of his holy humanity to his father's eternal will in all things; knowing that our Saviour had called them to him, that by speaking to them he might moderate a little the ardour which consumed him: for his disciples were not yet capable of relishing so great a mystery. Behold what was the subject of
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this conversation, after which our Saviour dismissed *Moses* and *Elias* full of consolation.

IV. Here are three things to be considered: First, the voice of the eternal father, which came from a bright cloud, in these words; *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him* (Matt. xvii. 5.) The eternal father declares thereby, that he not only approves of the designs of his son, and of the love he has for men, but also, that no man shall be agreeable to the father, unless he hears and imitates the son. For as in giving his son to us, he has given us all things in him; so we ought to find in him, every thing that is necessary for us, and look upon him at the same time as the remedy of our sins, and the model of our virtues. Our Lord has also told us, that *unless we abide in him we can bear no fruit*, that will be agreeable to his father, (*John* xv. 4.) Alas! how many souls are there that do not please God, because they are not in Christ. What is not in him, cannot be pleasing to the eternal father, who is not pleased but in his only son, who approves of nothing but the thoughts, intentions, and works, which are conformable to the thoughts, intentions, and works of Christ; and who rejects all those which Christ has judged unworthy of himself. Let us then only hear this well-beloved son, and shut our ears to every thing else.

V. We must observe secondly, that Jesus descending from the mount, *charged them, saying: tell the vision to no one, till the son of man rise from the dead* (Matt. xvii. 9) because the world was not capable of it; and unless people were well experienced in divine things, they could not enter as they ought into that mystery of divine love. Our Lord said to *Ananias*, speaking of *St. Paul*; *I will shew him how great things he is to suffer for the sake of my name*, (*Acts* ix. 16.) He had not as yet shewn him them, although he was already converted! that secret was revealed to him only in heaven, when he was caught up in a vision into the third region; from whence he returned so full of light and love, that after having written, that he had *heard words, which it is not granted to man to utter*; (*2 Cor.* xii. 4.) he concludes that he knew only *Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (*1 Cor.* ii. 2.) Indeed he thought of nothing afterwards but of loving and suffering; and suffering was as familiar to him as loving.

We may thereby comprehend why, after the fall of the first man, God has not given here below, at least to his faithful servants, a sure peace; but has been pleased that they should be subject to misery in this life. For as God does every thing for his elect, and

as the government of the earth is subordinate to the predestination of the saints, who are in this world, as in a school of heavenly wisdom, and in a continual exercise of pure love; he has covered the earth with so great a deluge of evils, that they can neither find rest nor security but in the ark, which is Christ. Thither it is they retire, and taste in secret, that sweet *peace, which the world cannot give*, and the hope of which takes from them the fear of tribulations and the love of false goods.

Wherefore our Saviour, after spending thirty years in a continual bitterness, was pleased to discover to those three disciples the secrets of his love and cross; that is, the solid glory and interior peace which he has hidden therein, and which he reserves only for his true followers; but he would not have that favour become public, till mankind, better instructed in those heavenly truths, fortified by the doctrine of his resurrection, and confirmed by the communication of the Holy Ghost, should be capable of these great mysteries.

Expect not then, O christian soul! the end or mitigation of sufferings, whilst you live on earth: for it is not the place of your repose. The happiness of the elect, in regard of whom God preserves this world, is to be unable to find any joy therein, and to be afraid above all things of wedding themselves to it, considering that those, who desire to settle their happiness, in any thing abstracted from God, meet with nothing but labour and affliction of Spirit. Seek therefore, when you suffer, for consolation and peace where it is to be found, that is, in the divine love and communication with Christ. Then will you experience that great truth, with which St. *Augustin* was so penetrated after his conversion; that it is infinitely sweet to be deprived of the pleasures of this world, and that we do ourselves a pleasure at last in abandoning what we had been afraid to lose.

XXVI. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His sorrow in the garden of Olives.

OUR Saviour's passion began, as his life did, by a sense of the cruel death he was to suffer, and the sins of the world he was to expiate. Thus when he beheld the moment approaching wherein he had resolved to die, he was pleased to suffer death in such

such a manner, as he might at the same time satisfy the justice of God to the full rigour, and excite our hearts to love him, and our minds to know him: for therein consisted the whole fruit which he designed to gather from his labours.

He waited not therefore till his executioners came to shed his blood; but being unable to suffer delay, he abandoned himself to so profound a sorrow, that all the endeavours of his enemies could never have caused the like in him, because the hatred they bore him, could not equal the love he had for us. He was pleased to make us comprehend in the beginning of his Passion, that it was rather the effect of his choice and his love, than of the violence of the *Jews*. For that reason he retired into a place, where he was wont to pray, that his enemies might find him more easily; and there before they appeared, having deprived the sacred Humanity of the support it received from the Divinity, and discovering to it at the same time every thing it had to suffer, he reduced it to a cruel agony.

II. For having washed his disciples feet, instituted in their presence the sacrament of his body and blood, and made them a very moving and sublime discourse; he entered with them into the garden of *Gethsemani*. Then seeing them dejected, he exhorted them to have recourse to prayer, as to the most efficacious remedy against sadness, and retired afterwards a little further with three of his apostles, *Peter, James, and John*; having represented to himself in a most lively manner every thing he was to suffer, the pains, torments, ignominies, the triumph of his enemies, the contempt of his person, wisdom, and miracles, the new kinds of reproach and cruelty which were prepared for him, he fell into such a dejection, as would have deprived him of life, had it not been miraculously preserved: he testified this himself, saying: *my soul is sorrowful even to death* (Matt. xxvi. 38.) He returned to his disciples, in order to find with them some comfort in this extremity; but they themselves were so dejected by his sadness, who were wont to fortify them in their troubles, that our Saviour returned to prayer, without receiving any consolation from them; and said to his father in the excess of his grief: *O my father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.* (39.)

He found his father inexorable, and his sorrow augmented to such a degree, that it more resembled the agony of a dying man, than the ordinary sorrow of a man that suffers; but notwithstanding his pain, he continued his prayer; which made the evangelist say, that *being in an agony he prayed the longer* (Luke xx. 11, 43.) The combat

combat which was then maintained between the inferior and superior part, occasioned him such an abundant sweat of blood, that after bathing his garments, it also moistened the ground where he prayed.

Then an angel descended from heaven to comfort him; not that he wanted the necessary power for opposing the weakness of nature; but in order to teach all those who suffer, that their consolation and strength must come from heaven. So the angel, who was not ignorant who that afflicted person was, did not lose time in proposing different motives of consolation to him; but only besought him in the name of heaven and earth; and of all sinners to apply to their evils, out of his infinite love, that sovereign remedy which they could not receive but from him alone; and to prefer to the reproaches and torments of one day, the eternal glory which he was to obtain thereby: for as the apostle says, *having joy proposed unto him, he underwent the cross, despising shame.* (Heb. xii. 2.)

The sinner, for whose love our Saviour vouchsafed to undergo so great a conflict, ought here to beg of him the interior spirit, and the divine dispositions which made him then suffer by a voluntary submission, without any human comfort, what appeared so terrible to nature. No words can express it, no understanding is capable of comprehending it, without a particular gift of the spirit of God.

IV. Thus it is that he who supports others in affliction abandons himself thereto; that the comforter of all men falls into desolation; that the joy of heaven and earth was overwhelmed with grief; and that the son of God, in order to gain our hearts, was pleased to take our infirmities upon himself.

Two things occasioned him this mortal sorrow, the first was the greatness and infinite number of the sins of the world, which were all in particular present to his mind, with a clear view of the divine majesty offended by so many crimes, and of the ruin of souls destined to eternal punishments. The second was the great number of those to whom his death would be unprofitable. As he was comforted on one hand, by the certainty of the advantages he was to reap from his passion; he was afflicted on the other, in thinking how few men would receive the benefit from that remedy, which his love had prepared for all; and he found no consolation therein, but in submitting to the immutable decrees of his father, who would have him suffer for those very persons that would not profit by his sufferings.

V. His

V. His conflict and prayer continued about three hours, during which that good shepherd, who in his greatest sufferings, not forgetting his flock, visited his disciples thrice: having found them asleep the first and second times, he exhorted them to watch and pray; and the third time perceiving that he who was to betray him, was not far off, he said to them, *sleep now and take your rest*: and a little after, *rise, let us go, behold he approaches, who shall betray me*, (Matt. xxvi. 45, 46.) By these words he taught us, according to the interpretation of St. Hilary, that we ought not to wait till the enemy is at hand, before we watch and pray; but we must be upon our guard when he is at a distance, lest we be surprised by him; that the apprehension of danger does not permit us to take any rest; but the hour being come when the enemy assaults us, we ought to be without fear, and depend upon the valour and experience of our Head, who has taken our dangers upon himself, and fights for us.

In fine, that ineffable love increased to such a height, that it could not be satisfied but by reducing Christ to such a state of interior desolation which was without example; and shewing us thereby, that we should find in him alone the remedy of all our fears and weaknesses: for this mystery is full of admirable instructions for us. Our Saviour was pleased to feel that extreme pain, that we might not think all is lost, when the *inferior part* avoids what is contrary to it; and to teach us, that we shall not be judged according to the infirmity of the flesh, but according to the disposition of our will. He truly suffered a mortal grief, but it was proportioned to his power, in order to persuade us, that God, who dispenses the miseries of this life as he pleases, *will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will make us escape in temptation, that we may be able to bear it.* (1 Cor. x. 13.)

He clearly shewed us in himself two seemingly opposite inclinations; the one corporeal, which abhorred sufferings; and the other rational, which remained subject to God; that a christian may not think himself an enemy to God, because the flesh resists the spirit; but that he may endeavour to subdue it, and comprehend that the animal man does not hurt the interior man, whilst the interior man adheres to the law of God.

There descended an angel from heaven to comfort Christ, to shew all those that suffer, that God forgets them not in tribulation; that their labours are known in heaven; and that it is from thence they ought to expect their consolation.

In fine, the son of God besought his heavenly father to dispense with so rigorous a precept, although he well knew it would not be granted to him; to instruct us in so necessary a truth, that the divine help consists not in delivering us from the afflictions which God sends us, but in making us support them with an humble submission, and an entire conformity to his designs, in remaining always united to him by love.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in the sorrow he suffered in the garden of Olives.

THY love, O divine Jesus! can bear no delay; it urges thee continually; and to wait only two or three hours for the beginning of thy sufferings, is a great suffering to thee. Thou waitest not till the soldiers load thee with chains; till the *Jews* and *Gentiles* overwhelm thee with reproaches; till the inhuman executioners tear thy innocent flesh, and fasten it to the cross; thou abandonest thyself to so bitter a grief, that thou art obliged to complain, and to seek some comfort amongst rude men, incapable of compassionating thy pain.

How different is my conduct from thine, O my Saviour! I am overcome by sadness; when I seek joy, I am troubled with a thousand afflicting thoughts, from which I endeavour to deliver myself; and thou, O repose of my soul! overcome by thy love alone; thou voluntarily abandonest thyself to thy sorrow; recallest to thy mind every thing that can afflict that heart so great, so tender, and so charitable; which is the refuge of those that suffer. Thou feelest all the evils which we feel; but we feel them, because we are miserable, and thou feelest them, because thou art merciful.

It is not enough for thy love to wait for these floods of sorrows which were preparing for thee. Thou tormentest thyself beforehand, by representing them to thyself in as lively a manner as if thou didst already suffer them, and permittest thy sacred humanity, struggling at the same time with the desire and fear of suffering, to shed a sweat of blood in that violent agitation; and thou wilt be destitute of all help, as if there were no more consolation to be hoped for by thee, either in heaven, on earth, in thy friends, or in God himself.

II. Is

II. Is it thus then, O divine fortitude! that thou allowest thyself to be weakened, when thou must combat such enemies as none but thyself can overcome? What is become of that desire of suffering, which thou so impatiently desirest the accomplishment of? The hour approaches, and thou tremblest, and art sorrowful, O thou joy of my soul! Is that the courage and vigour of mind, which all afflicted persons ought to find and imitate in thee?

May thy infinite love be praised, glorified, and adored eternally, O my God! Thou hast reduced thyself to this extremity, only to become like me in all things; to shew me that nothing could oblige thee to suffer but thy love; and to be my consolation and model in the miseries of this life. For if thou didst appear intrepid and courageous in suffering, would there be any reason to wonder thereat, O my Saviour! since thou art the power of God? That constancy is proper to thee: and we shall see in the time of thy passion that nothing is capable of dejecting thee. But to hide that divine strength for the love of me, to feel human weakness, to fear torments before they happen, as I am wont to do, I who am but misery and infirmity, and to be willing that sorrow should begin in thee as it does in me, by fear and sadness, this, O divine Jesus! is what can only proceed from thy love: it is thy love that is thy executioner, a thousand times more cruel than the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who prepare to torment thee. There as yet appear neither rods, nails, nor enemies; and thou art already covered with a bloody sweat, with which the ground where thou prayest is all bathed. What occasions this blood to flow from thy veins, but the love thou hast for me?

III. Thou art all love, O my Jesus! and *the fire thou castest on earth*, is a flame of pure charity. How happy should I be, if I had never departed from thee, O divine light! But why have I still to this very day other views and thoughts than those of pleasing thee? Why do I seek any thing besides thee? Thy love for me is so full of zeal and mercy, that thou hast thought on every thing that concerns me, and hast considered every moment of afflictions wherein my weakness should have need of being supported; that I might seek my consolation in thee alone, after having seen thee subject to my infirmities.

Thus it is that thou art pleased to assure me by thy example, that though I find myself to be weak and timid, I ought not to be without hope; that I am not abandoned by thee, when I am overwhelmed with sorrow; and that though I be sensible of the evils that befall me, I cease not to be thine; since thou thyself, O my God! most strong and invincible as thou art, wast not free
from

from these weaknesses. Be thou blessed, O Lord! who hast ordained that the miseries which overwhelmed me, and seem to weaken in me the vigour of thy spirit, should serve to conduct me to thee; because seeing them in thee, I recover my breath, and always feel myself animated with new confidence.

IV. Thou knowest, O divine wisdom! how grievous it is for a soul, which desires to be wholly thine, to find itself oppressed with interior sorrow, and assaulted with such violent temptations, that it no longer knows to whom to have recourse, and that heaven itself seems to be shut against it. Then it thinks itself deprived of all help both divine and human; it is neither sensible of faith, hope, nor charity; it does not even presume to lift up its eyes to thee, it finds itself at so great a distance from thee; and it cannot receive any consolation from creatures. It imagines that grace is withdrawn from it, that nature remains abandoned to its own corruption. It sees nothing in itself but fear, sadness, dejection, inconstancy, importunate thoughts, irregular sentiments, disgust, contradiction, and bitterness. O divine love! faithful love, who never art nearer thy servants, than when they are in tribulation, thou seemest to have abandoned thyself thereto without measure. Thou wast pleased to suffer all these miseries, so unworthy of thee, that we might cast our eyes continually upon thee, as upon our model; that we might expect from thee, as from our strength, the victory over our enemies; and that we might have an entire confidence in thee, as in our only remedy.

What am I, O divine love! to deserve the blessings thou heapest upon me? O that thou wouldst make as great a change in me, as that which thou madest in thyself; that is, to make me strong, of a weak one as I am; as thou becamest weak, of a strong one as thou wast. But make of me, O divine love! whatever thou pleasest. I resign myself entirely to thee. I cannot love thee as I ought, but by thee; nor esteem thee, but in thee; nor come to thee, if thou drawest me not; nor rely upon thee, if thou thyself keepest me not: and since every thing ought to be thine, take me, O Lord! possess me; that being in thy hands, I shall be no longer my own. Take from me all the pleasures of life; all human help; and all the desires of consolation and joy; that I may find none of them but in thee alone, O thou love and life of my soul!

How blind and foolish am I, when I seek my consolation out of thee, O thou only joy of my soul! How ungrateful am I, when I forget the love I owe thee, and spend my life in sin, which occasions thee so great a sorrow! Why am I not ashamed of myself!

How,

How can I suffer myself! Why do I not desire the earth to swallow up, when I behold thee weeping with tears of blood, for the evils I have committed; and expiating with so bitter a sorrow, the criminal pleasures to which I have abandoned myself! O that I could see myself free from myself! or rather that I beheld myself only in thee, what different sentiments should I have! Why was I born, if I must give thee so much pain! Have mercy on me, O infinite mercy! I beseech thee do, by the sorrow thou sufferedst, by the blood thou sheddest, and by the love thou bearest me. Grant that after sinning against thee, I may deserve to suffer for thee. Give me, O divine Jesus! a spark of that love wherewith thou burnest for me, that I may know myself, hate myself, and take revenge on myself for what I have done against thee.

VI. But since the sight of those who are to perish, still redoubles thy sorrow, O divine love! permit me not to perish. Thy sorrow is great enough, without being augmented by the foresight of my ruin. Open my ears that I may hear thy voice; open my eyes, that I may behold thy examples; open my lips, that I may sing forth thy mercies; soften my heart, that it may become sensible of thy sorrow, and that I may be afraid of every thing that can renew them. Grant, O thou life of my soul! that I may feel what thou feelest; that I may bewail my wanderings as thou bewailest them; and that I may seek thee as thou seekest me; or rather, O my God! I ask nothing of thee, I resign myself to thy love, conduct me, change me, bind me, purify me, form me as thou pleasest, and suffer me not to be separated from thee.

O most holy mother of God! you who being shut up in your chamber, seled during that cruel night, all the torments that were prepared for your well-beloved son; impart to me the sentiments of your heart, that I may detest in myself the cause of his sorrows. O celestial court! founded upon the blood and sufferings of that divine Saviour, obtain me the love and graces which flow from that salutary fountain, that I may blefs with you for all eternity, the author of all our blessings. *Amen.*

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ praying in the garden.

HOW comes it that I learn not of thee, O master of eternal truth! where I ought to seek for help and consolation, when I am tempted and disconsolate! Thou goest to thy father, who requires thee to die for me; thou addressiest thyself to his love, which sacrificed thee for my salvation; and thou hast recourse to his omnipotent hand, even when it is heavy upon thee. Wretch that I am, my afflictions continue so long, only because I do not come to pour out my afflicted heart before thee. I see thee in thy prayer bathed with a sweat of blood, overwhelmed with sorrow, supported by an angel; and at the time when it would seem thou shouldest be most dejected, thou goest to meet those that come to apprehend thee. Thou hast so much respect for thy father's will in every thing, that thou canst not suffer thy disciples to defend thee. Thou appearest all on a sudden to be pleased with what gave thee so much fear before. In fine, thou art become in a moment as strong as thou wast weak; and as ready to obey, as if the command were agreeable to thee.

How comes it then, O my God! that I seek consolation out of thee? where can I find any thing that is solid but in thee? I adore thee, O divine and amiable hand! that comfortest me by chastising me, that strengthenest me by afflicting me, that elevatest me by dejecting me, and that givest me life by mortifying me. I have great reason to be sorrowful when I depart from thee; when I acknowledge not that paternal love wherewith thou governest me; when I am not persuaded that thou lovest me more tenderly when thou afflictest me, than I love myself when I seek my consolation out of thee.

The height of my misery is my flying from thee when I suffer, and seeking comfort elsewhere, or seeking it, not according to thy will, but by the motion of my self-love, which always opposes the merciful designs thou hast over my soul. Deliver me from myself, O my God! because I ruin myself, by putting obstacles continually in the way of thy light and benefits.

II. But why, O Lord! sayest thou to thy eternal father; father, *not my will, but thine be done* (Luke xxii. 42.) Thou who canst not sin, who art holy by nature, *full of grace and truth*, art thou capable of willing what thy father wills not, or of not willing what he wills? No, Lord; but thou wast then taken up about my wants,

and thoughtest on remedying them. Thou wast pleased to feel in thyself that opposition to the divine will, that I might not lose courage in the resistances of nature when my reason consents not thereto; and that I might understand that I shall be judged only according to my positive will of seeking thee or of flying from thee, of serving thee or of resisting thee.

How sweet, liberal, condescending, and charitable is thy love! Thou abasedst thyself so far as to feel in thyself the motions which my misery excites in me against thee; in order to teach me to make use of them for coming to thee; and to make for myself of *them* a subject of merit, a proof of obedience, love and fidelity to thee. Thou art, O Lord! the true father of this poor sinner, and the faithful comforter of my afflicted soul. When shall I know thee? when shall I enter into thy designs? when shall I love thee with all my heart? when shall I seek thee without inconstancy? when shall I sincerely say to thee on all occasions, *not my will, but thine be done.*

How have I deserved, O my God! to be governed by so upright, so amiable, and so paternal a will? When did I find any harm by following it, and when did I find any good by following my own? It is by the conduct of thy divine will, that all the saints abandoning the care of themselves, and reserving only that of obeying thee, have arrived at the happiness which they possess, and shall possess eternally: and I who am but a worm of the earth, would govern myself! The heavens, the elements, and the whole universe preserve the order and regularity of their motions, only by the impressions they receive from thy divine wisdom; and I who am but dust and ashes, have the boldness to presume that I can do any thing, when I am separated from thee! Thou vouchsafest to cast thy eyes upon me, though thou hast so many holy and faithful servants; and I withdraw from thy amiable conduct, to follow my own will.

III. Blind, foolish, and wretched that I am! I fancy that I know every thing that belongs to me, and I do not so much as see the evils that surround me, nor the incapacity I am in of knowing myself without thee, who art *the light of my eyes.* Without thee myself love blinds me in all things that concern me; and I neither perceive the evil wherewith I am threatened, nor that which I do to myself. I know how to convert good into evil; but I know not how to draw good from evil. I am capable of falling, and incapable of rising again. I can throw myself into temptation, danger, and the abyss of misery; but cannot get out from thence. I know how to pervert thy favour, and to render unprofitable all the blessings thou graatest me; and thereby I become weak, without support or help,

help, insupportable to myself, oppressed with those evils wherein I have voluntarily engaged myself; but cannot return to thee, unless thou breakest my bonds, preventest me, and drawest me; and yet I always presume much on myself.

I am afraid to resign myself to thee; I would have thee to conduct me according to my own weak views, and do not intrust myself to the conduct of thy providence. O deplorable blindness! O incomprehensible misery! I walk as a blind man; I govern myself as one that is senseless: *I will and I will not, as the sluggard*, (Prov. xiii. 4.). I let myself be dejected with the least contradiction, as a man without courage; I comfort myself without reason, as a child; and I cannot submit myself to thee, as a rational person ought to do.

Pardon me these follies, O father of mercies! and do always thy own will, and not mine. It belongs to you, O paternal bowels! to bear with this ungrateful son, and to heal him. Treat me not, O God! according to my unworthiness, but according to thy love. Thou governest me always with wisdom and goodness, and changeest all my miseries into blessings. The losses, temptations, and adversities which befall me, become in thy hands a source of graces, which thou designest to grant me; and thou often conductest me to my happiness, by the very way wherein I think myself lost.

Thou seeest all my wants, because thou art a God infinitely wise. Thou designest me all sorts of blessings, because thou art a most amiable father. Thou assuagest all my pains, because thou art a perfect comforter. Thou healest all my evils, because thou art the sovereign physician; and still I do not entirely resign myself to thee!

IV. O divine Jesus! O true father of my soul! have no longer regard to this rebellious will, and the enemy of its own good. Let thine be done at all times, in all places, and in all things. I make a sacrifice this day with all my heart of my will to thine. Conduct me, O God! when I stray; call me back, when I depart from thee; stop me, when I fly from thee; and embrace me, when I seek thee. Treat me, O Lord! according to thy always upright, always holy, and always merciful will: and judge me not according to mine, which is so feeble and inconstant. Thou seeest how liberal I am in promising, and how faithless in performing: supply by thy love what is wanting in me.

I chuse rather to live by thy will in chains, in the power of my enemies, abandoned, afflicted, and persecuted, than to be free and

happy by my own choice. One single moment of thy divine communications can render the bitterest things sweet to me; and by thy light the most difficult ways become the straitest and most certain. Thus, O Lord! if it be not advantageous for me to remain in joy, and to serve thee full in peace, disturb, in what manner thou pleasest, the repose and serenity of my life: but hold me continually in thy hand, and never permit my will to be done to the prejudice of thine.

O most sacred mother, and faithful handmaid of God! you who in that time of sorrow offered yourself to the eternal father to suffer with your son and his; and who wert always conformable to his will in all things, notwithstanding all the affection of your maternal heart; obtain that this truth may be imprinted so deep in my soul, that I may never will any thing but what God shall will. Assist me, ye blessed spirits! and obtain for me of this divine Saviour, that my will may not be accomplished on earth, but his; as you accomplish it in heaven. *Amen.*

XXVII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The treason of Judas.

WHILST Christ, after his last supper, was teaching his disciples a most heavenly doctrine, and was making them a discourse full of love and tenderness towards them, whilst he prayed in the garden, and was there bathed in a sweat of blood; *Judas*, that false friend, thought of nothing but how to put in execution the resolution he had taken of betraying him. Our Saviour was pleased to suffer this bad treatment from a man to whom he had given so many marks of friendship; and as he could not subject himself to all the pains to which we are exposed, because many of them were inconsistent with the dignity of his person, he made choice of those that were felt in the most lively manner; such as treason, and false friendship. As there is no sweeter pleasure to a heart, than what proceeds from a sincere friendship; to abuse it against a friend, is to wound him in the most sensible part. The holy scripture reckons among the great blessings of life, the happiness of having found a faithful friend. *A faithful friend, says the wise man, is a strong defence: and he that hath found him, hath found a treasure. To a faithful*

a faithful friend there is no comparison; and there is no poise of gold and silver able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity. (Ecclus. vi. 14, 15.)

The word of God also represents betrayed friendship as a great calamity, especially when it brings upon a friend (which is but too common) a public reproach, and a considerable prejudice, by discovering his secret; because my friend, being another *myself*, from whom I have hid nothing, and to whom I communicate, without reserve, whatever befalls me, whether troublesome or agreeable; if he happens to join my enemies; if he discovers to them what he knows of me; and if he makes use of my confidence in him, for destroying me; can I, without an extraordinary help of the divine grace, dissemble so black a perfidy? This is so sensible to nature, that he who suffers it without complaining, and sincerely pardons it, ought to pass for a miracle of patience.

Some great doctors think, that this pain is the angel of Satan, whereof St. Paul speaks, when he says; (*2 Cor. xii. 7.*) *There was given me a sting of my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me*; and that he thereby understands his false brethren, whom the devil raised up to torment him, to oppose his doctrine, and to weaken his authority. This persecution affected him so sensibly, that he begged of God several times to be delivered from it: he could not obtain the end of his affliction, but he obtained the grace of bearing it patiently.

II. What Christ suffered on this subject is without example. I say nothing here of the falsehood of the *Pharisees*, who, by inviting him to eat, praising him, and treating him with all the exterior marks of respect and veneration, endeavoured to surprise him in his words, and to lay snares for his destruction, although he had never done any thing but good to them. But that, among the disciples whom he had chosen to be the pillars of his church, whom he had heaped his favours upon, and whom he regarded as his intimate friends, and most faithful confidants, there should be found one that betrayed him, sold him, and delivered him up to his enemies, is what ought to be particularly considered.

Some days before, *Judas* seeing *Magdalen* pour a precious ointment on our Saviour's head, murmured openly thereat, because he said it might have been *sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor*; not that he cared for the poor, as the evangelist adds, *but because he was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put into it* (*John xii. 5, 6.*) And thus, to make up the loss he sustained thereby, he resolved to sell Christ to the *Jews*, who sought
to

to apprehend him: and without caring whether our Saviour should perish in their hands, or escape from thence by a miracle; that miserable wretch thought of nothing, but how to satisfy his avarice.

It is even probable, that in order to justify so black an action before the *Jews*, he spoke a great deal of ill of his master to them; as, that in preaching up the contempt of the world and riches, he eat with the rich and worldlings; that he used precious perfumes; that he was often with sinners; and such other things as his malice suggested to him, and were conformable to the sentiments of those to whom he spoke. Afterwards he offered to deliver him into their hands without any noise. The *Jews* accepted the offer, praised his zeal for the public good, and promised him thirty pieces of silver, according to these words of the prophet *Zachary*; *they took thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued of the children of Israel.* (Matt. xxvii. 9.)

III. After this base treaty, *Judas* advised them to be in readiness; but not to stir till he returned to them. He acquainted them with the time and place, where the Lord was accustomed to retire alone to pray. Afterwards he went and sat down at table with him; and our Lord having said, that he should be betrayed that night by one of his disciples, *Judas*, though he knew himself guilty, ceased not to ask with the rest, who that traitor was; he permitted our Saviour to wash his feet, and heard his heavenly doctrine. In that state he received the body and blood of his master, with the sacerdotal dignity: and that meek Lamb distinguished him not from others in the communication of so many blessings. But seeing the obstinacy of that heart was not softened by all those marks of tenderness, and suffering besides the delay of his passion with pain, he said to him: *What thou art doing, do quickly,* (John xiii. 27.) The other disciples imagined, that Christ had sent him some whither; and *Judas* departed immediately, and went to accomplish his perfidy.

David being persecuted and betrayed by his son *Abalom*, expresses, in a very affecting manner, how sensibly our Lord felt the treachery of his apostle: *for if my enemy, says he, had reviled me, I would verily have borne it; and if he that hated me, had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have bid myself from him. But thou a man of one mind; my guide, and my familiar; who tookest sweetmeats together with me, in the house of God we walked with consent,* (Ps. liv. 13.) In fine, it is sufficient to mention here, for shewing how great Christ's affliction was on this occasion, that he who suffered such great torments afterwards without complaint, complained of this to his disciples, and to *Judas* himself.

IV. Our Saviour's passion began by this infidelity, which pierced him to the heart, whereby he gave us wonderful examples of patience and meekness. Would to God that *Judas* had been the only person that betrayed his master: but alas! that perfidious apostle has an infinite number of followers. We still sell Christ daily, and throw away his grace and friendship for the pleasures of a moment, and for a bubble of worldly glory. Though he is not *now* so sensible of this unworthy preference, yet it is certain, that he was most sensible of it *then*; and that whilst *Judas* betrayed him, his divine wisdom foresaw all those false brethren and prevaricating christians, who were to rise up against him in his church, for whom nevertheless he was going to suffer death. His friendship changes not in regard of us, and our infidelity towards him increases daily.

Now, if we think we have no such perfidy to reproach ourselves with, let every one of us at least enter into himself, to see whether we have as much zeal for the glory of God, as passion for worldly honours; whether the divine love has given us a disgust of human engagements; and whether we renounce our own will, that we may be faithful to Christ. If we knew the depth of our corruption, we should find ourselves much fuller of the spirit of *Judas* than we imagine; and perhaps should have no less reason to hate ourselves, than to abhor him.

If we consider how often we have entered into our Lord's temple, loaded with a thousand sins that we have committed against him; how many times we have bowed the knee before him, calling him our father, king, and friend, though our hearts were very far from him; how long we have remained in his house, maintaining a correspondence against him and his law, with the devil, the world, and the flesh, which are his enemies; on how many occasions we have broke our words, after swearing to him an inviolable fidelity; we cannot doubt but that he may justly look upon us as false friends, and real prevaricators.

V. But it was not only for our instruction, and for expiating our infidelities, that our Saviour was pleased to suffer that of his disciple; but also for the comfort of his faithful servants, who have such frequent occasions of suffering the like persecutions from their false friends, when they are desirous of serving God sincerely. For they are *then* thought to be capricious and fantastical; they are accused of hypocrisy and singularity; their smallest faults are exaggerated, and their most innocent actions are misrepresented; their zeal is treated as passion and imprudence; their fear of offending God as scruple and meanness of spirit; and their refraining of company,

as

as incivility and melancholy. In fine, every thing they transact is turned into poison; and their own virtues are made use of for persecuting them.

God alone knows how sensible this kind of pain is to his servants, and the want they are *then* in of his assistance. For they find themselves forsaken by their friends, and have no longer any human consolation; because their conduct is sincere, and they neither seek protection for defending themselves, nor artifice for preventing the evils that may be done them; but endeavour, with a sincere charity, to win those who are contriving their ruin, chusing always rather to lament in silence, and to suffer injustice, than to repel it.

Christ *then* saw his friends, and shewed them at the same time by his example, how they ought to *overcome evil by good*; and elevating themselves above human friendships, to fix their whole affection on him, by whom friends are loved with purity, enemies with charity, and false friends are suffered with patience and forbearance. A man that is so happy as to relish these truths, and to receive all these afflictions from the hand of God, finds in *him* his peace and comfort.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ bearing Judas's treachery.

THOU hast then been pleased to experience, O love of my heart! how severe a cross an unfaithful friend is. Thou receivedst *Judas* at thy table, heapedst thy favours upon him, and, as a sincere friend, communicatedst thy most private thoughts to him, even when he had his heart full of gall, and had conceived the design of delivering thee up to thy enemies. O divine wisdom! who knewest the soul of that perfidious wretch, how couldst thou look favourably upon him, in the midst of thy other disciples, who loved thee sincerely? Thou washed his feet, impartest to him thy divine priest-hood, givest him thy body and blood, and overlookest his perfidy, in order to spare him the confusion thereof.

Behold how thou behavest, O divine Jesus! Behold what the constancy of thy friendship is! Thou seest our treacheries, and still seekest us, drawing us by the chains of thy charity, gaining us by thy benefits, and endeavouring to mollify the obduracy of our hearts,
by

by the unction of thy grace. What advantage canst thou reap from our friendship, to seek, with so much care, even after those who betray thee? But it is the property of thy love, O my God! never to be discouraged, and to pursue us when we fly from thee.

II. Though thou alone deservest to be loved, O my glory and sovereign good! thou wouldst testify thy love to me, by suffering so sensible a pain as that which proceeds from false friendship; that if ever I should happen to be in the like circumstance, I might find in thee a solid consolation. That thou wouldst still endure this contradiction, I am not surpris'd, O Lord! it is an effect of thy infinite charity. What astonishes me, is, that a heart which has treated with thee, heard thy word, tasted thy sweetness, and is replenish'd with thy blessings, can want fidelity to thee.

Thy conversation gains souls; thy love charms hearts; thy example regulates life; thy word teacheth all truth; thy providence provides for all our wants; and thy goodness mitigates all our labours. Nothing is better known than thy liberality, truth, and the fidelity of thy love; and yet there is a heart that is unfaithful to thee; a disciple that betrays thee; and a man loaded with thy benefits, that delivers thee up to thy enemies.

We cannot be secure but by being strictly united to thee, O thou refuge of my soul! and the more singular thy favours are, the more dangerous are relapses when we withdraw from thee. How comes it then that I do not tremble, that I am not afraid of myself, and that I do not implore thy mercy every moment, when I find in myself that same corrupt nature, which was able to produce so horrid an ingratitude, and so black a perfidy!

Support me with thy omnipotent hand, O infinite goodness! If the devil persuaded one of thy apostles, in thy presence, to commit so great an excess, what security can I promise myself? If St. *Peter* renounced thee, for having had too much confidence in himself, what shall become of me, if thou fortifiest not my weakness? Humble me, O Lord! and keep me near thee: for alas! without thee I shall remain such as I am, always capable of abandoning and losing thee. I am never more ready to betray thee, and to be faithless to thy love and grace, than when I think myself in safety.

III. I look upon the perfidious *Judas* with astonishment and indignation, who made so little account of losing thee, that he betrayed thee without shame, by a testimony of affection, and preferred a base interest to thee, O my Saviour! *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Colos. ii. 3.) But I do not consider

consider myself. How many times have I concealed a corrupt heart under the appearances of piety? How many times have I abused thy benefits for satisfying my passions? How many times have I thrown away thy graces for earthly pleasures? How many times have I preferred the favour of men to thy divine entertainments? How many times have I sold thee for things of no value, without hearkening to thy inspirations, having regard to thy law, or being touched with thy bounties? Pardon me, O infinite mercy! my past infidelities, and the little confusion I have for them at present; and never permit me to fall therein again. Hast thou not too many like *Judas*, O my God! without my being also the companion of his perfidy?

IV. I cast myself at thy feet, O my Saviour and master! I acknowledge before thee, how unfaithful I have been to thee. Satisfy thyself, O father justly provoked! punish this perfidious wretch as thou pleasest; but permit me not to lose thy love, as *Judas* did, since I return to thee. Remember, O Lord! what thou didst for softening the hardened heart of thy apostle, how thou labouredst, though all in vain, for bringing him back again; and how greatly thou wast concerned at his loss. Have the same love for me as thou expressedst for him, since thou hast the same for all sinners; and make my heart sensible of it this very moment, in which I confess my infidelities before thee, and submit to all the satisfactions thou shalt require of me.

I can no longer bear the state I am in. I have been too long unfaithful to thee. Change me, O Lord! make of me what thou pleasest, provided thou receivest me into thy friendship. If I have been one of those that betrayed thee, let me be now of the number of those that love thee sincerely. The triumph of thy love is to render sinners saints, and traitors faithful. Convert me therefore, O divine love! and grant I may be faithful to thee until death.

V. But why, O king of glory! didst thou permit *Judas* to sell thee as a slave? Why didst thou give him power to treat thee with so much indignity? O goodness! O love! Thus it is thou dealest, O sweet Jesus! thou givest thyself without reserve; and when thou hast once given thyself to a soul, it treats thee as it pleases. Unhappy is the man who thus abuses thy love! happy is he, on the contrary, who embraces thee, possesses thee, and regards thee as his treasure.

If thou knewest, O faithless disciple! the worth of him whom thou sellest, and the immense riches which he possesses, thou wouldst have sold thyself to have bought him; but if thou art resolved

resolved to sell him, sell him to me, I will buy him at the price of every thing I have, and of every thing I am. The Jews shall not take him from me, I will hide him in my soul, there to serve and adore him. How is it, O my Saviour! that I hasten not with all my might to purchase thee, seeing thou art exposed to sale?

Thou wilt not have me to possess any thing that is more my own than thyself, who art my only good. Thou art my father, brother, friend, treasure, and nourishment; and if I may presume to say it, my slave: for in fine thou madest thyself a slave, for procuring me liberty; and thou wast pleased to be mine, by all the titles which give a man right to any thing. How rich am I in possessing thee, O my God! Thou alone art instead of all things to me. I receive thee therefore, O divine Jesus! as my happiness, embrace thee as my treasure, and desire that for the future thou mayest be all my beatitude, renouncing for thee every thing that is not thee.

What does he desire for whom thou art not sufficient, O thou life of my soul! is it possible for him to find any thing that can satisfy him! The soul that delights not in thee, and that seeks out of thee wherewith to satisfy itself, is either very sick, or already dead. With thee I am rich, without thee I am poor; with thee I am replenished with every thing that is good, without thee I am in want of every thing. Come into my heart, O divine Jesus! that I may love thee, possess thee, and never forsake thee more. Reign thou in me, and may I live in thee, O my happiness, my love, my joy, and my beatitude!

VI. Thou knowest, O faithful friend of my soul! how the too great attachment we have for our friends, weakens our love of thee, stops thy communications and most secret inspirations: and because thou art desirous of being the only friend of our souls, thou permittest them when they return to thee, to experience immediately the inconstancy and infidelity of human friendships. Thou knowest how sensible this pain is, and art not ignorant of the pleasure we enjoy in the confidence of a faithful friend. Thou commandest me therefore to be faithful in regard of all, but to be fixed to none but thee; and to place in thee alone my hope, my comfort, and all the pleasure of my life. I desire it, O my God! with all my heart! but since thou hast suffered for my love the treachery of a perfidious friend, give me strength to bear patiently whatever befalls me of the like: and grant that I may never allow myself to be either too much delighted with the affection of men, or dejected by their infidelity.

VII. If it be thy will that they should hate and persecute me, let thy will be done: grant only that I may also have the same will.

Possess

Possess my heart, shew me thy countenance, and fill me with thy love. Teach me not to complain, nor take revenge; but to do good for evil, to treat even those as my friends who are unfaithful to me; in a word, to be like thee, and to wish for nothing more. How dare I complain of my friends? How can I desire, O my God! that every one should love me, and that none should fail in the strictest duties of friendship towards me, when I behold thee receiving him at thy table who betrayed thee, and calling him thy friend, even when he delivers thee up to thy enemies?

O thou faithful friend of my soul! there is only thy friendship that is solid, constant, and true; and I give up every thing else without regret for meriting it. Pluck from my heart all love and hatred that hinders me from conversing with thee. Open my interior eyes, O divine light! and shew me the happy state of a soul that is forgotten, despised, and persecuted; which far from all earthly affection, can find thee alone, love thee with full liberty, be intimately united to thee, and call thee with an entire confidence, my Father, my God, and my only love. Sweet moment! happy hour! wilt thou never come? O that I could spend my whole life in this love, in this union, and in these embraces!

O Queen of angels, faithful Handmaid, sincere Lover of our Saviour, Mother and Refuge of sinners! obtain me the love of your well-beloved Son, and destroy in me all other love. Blessed spirits! who live by the love of God, and love all things in God, impart to me a share of those precious chains, which keep you for ever bound to him. *Amen.*

XXVIII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

His being seized in the garden of Olives.

THE first effect of Judas's treachery, was the seizing of our Saviour in the garden of *Olives*. That traitor having now lost all shame, appeared at the head of the soldiers, as the chief in that undertaking. We must not wonder that an apostle, who had forsaken God, was fallen in a short time into such great excess: since experience teaches us, that there are no men more wicked than those who after having been enlightened, have abandoned the purity of the faith, and the perfection of an evangelic life. When they have once despised the house of God, and shaken off the Lord's yoke, they

they no longer observe any measures; and disgusted at the fountain of living waters, they go to drink with an insatiable greediness in the poisoned rivers of the flesh and the world; and we might rather be much more surpris'd at the crimes they do not commit, than at those they do.

Thus it was that *Judas*, after having shut his eyes to the divine light, and his ears against the words of eternal life, after having extinguished the love of God in his heart, delivered himself up to the devil, and became in a few hours, from an apostle of Christ, the leader of those who sought to put him to death. He even advised them to lead him away with great precaution, lest he should escape from them.

II. As he knew our Saviour was accustomed to retire in the evenings into the garden of *Gethsemani*, and there alone to spend the night in prayer, he judged that the time and place were proper for the execution of his design. He therefore went secretly out of the town with some *Pharisees*, and a great number of armed soldiers; and because he foresaw that all precautions, and *force itself* would be unavailable, if Christ did not vouchsafe to allow himself to be taken, he put them in mind that he should be discharged from his promise, provided he delivered him into their hands, whatever should happen afterwards.

But there was also another inconvenience to be feared; it was that many among them knew not Christ, and that even those who knew him, might be mistaken in the dark; so he walked before them, telling them that the man whom he should kiss, was he whom they were to seize. Behold what were *Judas's* thoughts and views, whilst that meek Lamb, with his eyes bathed in tears, quite covered with a bloody sweat, and burning with love even for him who betrayed him, was treating with his eternal Father about the salvation and remedy of mankind.

III. Our Saviour seeing that *his hour* was come, and that he was going to fall into the hands of sinners, was pleased to give his disciples, who were not far from thence, an illustrious example of the constancy wherewith they were one day to suffer great labours for his love, and of the submission they ought to have to the orders of God, how difficult soever they might appear to them. Thus without waiting for *Judas* and the soldiers, whom that traitor brought with him, Jesus went to meet them with an undaunted countenance, and asked them *whom they sought for*.

Although

Although he had resolved to let himself be taken, he judged that it was necessary first to manifest his divine power to his apostles, yet weak in faith, and by them to teach the whole world, that human malice could not prevail against him *of itself*; that he was faster bound by the chains of his charity, than by those of his enemies; and that his passion was the effect of his love, rather than of the violence of men.

In fine, to render those inexcusable that were come to apprehend him, to force them to own the weakness of their endeavours, to induce them to acknowledge the crime they committed, and to repent thereof; when they had said they sought Jesus of Nazareth, he answered them, *I am he*. And these words were so powerful, that Judas, the Pharisees, the soldiers, and the officers of justice were overthrown thereby, as if they had been struck down by a thunderbolt.

Christ might then have very well retired, if he had pleased, or have still wrought some other miracle; but being content with having made them feel his power, he permitted them to rise again; and after having a second time asked them *whom they sought*, and answered them that *he was the man*, he forbade them to touch any of his apostles; and that divine shepherd, even in the midst of his own danger, did not abandon the care of his flock. So that indeed the apostles received no bad treatment; they were not so much as threatened to be seized; which ought to appear extraordinary on such an occasion. But none can hurt those whom our Lord preserves.

IV. Neither did Christ permit them to load him with chains so soon; he would first speak, with his ordinary meekness, to the chief of the Pharisees and the priests, whom he saw mixed with the soldiers, in an action so unworthy of their character. He asked them why they came to take him in the night-time, as a thief, with swords and clubs, since he had been daily in the temple, where he taught publicly. They knew not what answer to make our Saviour; neither durst they lay hands upon him: when Malchus, a domestic of the high priest, having advanced with more boldness than the rest, Peter asked Christ's permission to make use of the sword, and without waiting for an answer, struck Malchus, and cut off his right ear; but our Saviour immediately restored it to him, and forbade Peter to use violence.

Shall I not drink the cup, says he, (*John xviii. 2.*) *which my father hath given me? How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled*, (*Matt. xxvi. 54.*) and what shall become of mankind, if I redeem them not by my death?

death? *Put up thy sword into its place, and remember that all those who take the sword, shall perish by the sword (52.)* If I were willing to employ any external power for my defence, *thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (53.)* Then Peter retired, and all the other disciples fled. This flight was not only an effect of their weakness; but also a disposition of the eternal counsel, which had decreed that Christ should suffer alone.

Then turning towards the *Pharisees*, he permitted them to do what they would, by saying to them; *this is your hour, and the power of darkness (Luke xxii. 53.)* And immediately Judas coming up to Jesus, said; *bail Rabbi: and kissed him (Matt. xxvi. 49.)* Thus it was that friends were accustomed to salute one another in *Palestine*; and our Saviour having received this traitor into the number of his disciples, rejected him not; but said to him with his ordinary goodness; *friend, what art thou come for? (Matt. xxvi. 50.)* *Is it with a kiss that thou betrayest the son of man, and makest use of this testimony of friendship for delivering him up to his enemies? (Luke xxii. 48.)*

It is difficult to say here which of the two is most admirable, whether the obduracy of the human heart, when it has once forsaken God, and become obstinate in sin; or the mildness and tenderness of our Lord, even towards those to whom he foresees it will be unprofitable. But it is also a great subject of fear and humiliation to us; since as we are all descended from the same mass of corruption, so we are capable of the same infidelity.

Judas did not relent at these words so full of sweetness; and the Jewish ministers who only waited for that signal, flew furiously upon that innocent Lamb, beat him unmercifully, trampled him under foot, and tied his hands close behind his back; saying to him a thousand injurious things, calling him impostor, magician, one possessed with the devil, a seducer of the people, and making him suffer many other indignities, which their rage suggested to them, and which it is easy to imagine.

They dragged him afterwards in a most violent manner, to the high priest's house, discharging against him, without any moderation, all the hatred they had preserved so long in their hearts, though he made no resistance against them. For that divine Lamb, amongst all these bad treatments, opened not his mouth to complain; and whilst he was worried in the midst of those wolves thirsting after his blood, his heart was in heaven. By continual groans, he begged mercy of his father for sinners, and offered unto him all the affronts he

he endured for them. Nothing disturbed the serenity of his soul. He that trembled before the engagement, and was sorrowful unto death, drew new strength from the wounds he received in fighting; being more violently urged than ever with the desire of accomplishing his sacrifice.

V. Pious persons may here find, as well as in the other mysteries of our Saviour's passion, ample matter for contemplation; not only in considering his exterior sufferings; but much more still, by entering into his interior sentiments. And even those who consider only the outward appearance of these mysteries, reap notwithstanding great advantage from thence; because their souls always find a most solid nourishment therein. But he that can enter into *the boles of the rock*, and discover the infinite riches of that amorous heart, is so surpris'd, changed, and transported, that he no longer knows himself; and he experiences with an ineffable sweetness, that those *divine bands*, which he beholds so closely tied with cords, *distil myrror* abundantly.

But if we do not yet comprehend the treasures that are contained in Christ's captivity; let us at least compare our life with his, and his innocency with our sins. Let us consider what he suffers, and what we have deserved; and we shall find, that though, in order to pardon us so many crimes, he should require of us the like punishments, we should still have reason to bless his mercies for ever. What ought then to be our gratitude and love, when we see the son of God drawing upon himself all the fury of his enemies, to preserve his disciples from it; being unable to suffer the least of his servants to be ill treated; and taking upon himself all our chains, in order to secure us an entire freedom.

Are we not very miserable, if instead of keeping our senses and hearts subject to his law, instead of loving our bonds, and relishing the happiness of so sweet a captivity, we break the yoke he puts upon us, without considering that by following the licentiousness of our own desires, and abandoning ourselves to a criminal liberty, we load Christ with chains, without comparison more severe than those wherewith the *Jews* fettered him, and engage ourselves in an eternal slavery.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ seized in the garden of Olives.

WHO is the man that presumes to seize thee? Who can bind thy infinite power, O King of glory? Is it possible that there should be any hearts so barbarous as to treat a divine person with so much indignity? Thy meekness, O my God! converts souls; thy modesty gains hearts; thy presence charms the eyes and minds of those that behold thee; and thy benefits fill the whole earth. How then can there be found any men so ungrateful, cruel, and bold, as to lay hands upon the Lord's anointed, to oppress him with injuries, affronts, and chains, as a thief and malefactor!

And thou, O life of my soul! not only dost not fly, nor hide thyself; but goest to meet thy enemies, yieldest up thy sacred body to them, and forbiddest thy disciples to make any resistance. By the touch of thy hand thou healest the wound of *Malchus*, who was come to apprehend thee. Thou refuseth the assistance of angels, sendest away thy apostles, and thinkest on nothing but the cup, which thy father has prepared for thee; because thou wilt be the model of our obedience, and the remedy of our evils.

Be thou blessed and glorified eternally, O my hope and Salvation! After having prayed thy Father to remove that bitter cup from thee, obedience is so dear to thee, that thou willest nothing but what he wills. In spite of the reluctancies of nature, thou art wholly ready to suffer the torments, the mere thoughts of which occasioned thee a mortal fear, and thou still hidest thy majesty, that nothing may stop the fury of thine enemies.

II. Discover to my soul, O splendor of eternal light! those interior chains, which keep thee so closely bound to the will of thy father, and to the love thou hast for man. Without these invisible bonds, who could seize thee, or ill-treat thee, O my love! By these bonds it is that thou art fettered, dragged, thrown on the ground, and exposed to so many affronts. Why dost thou not give me a share of those precious chains, O thou life of my soul! why dost thou not bind me at least interiorly, whilst thou art chained for me? If thou wilt suffer alone the captivity which I deserve, permit me not therefore to abuse this dear-bought liberty, in order to commit those crimes which I behold thee expiating.

III. I adore you, O divine hands! which are bound only to fetter my enemies. I adore you, O precious chains! which draw down upon me such great blessings. Alas! were it not much better for me to be loaded with chains, than to be licentious free, as I am? O my God! who beholdest my misery, I beseech thee by thy chains to deliver me from those which keep me at a distance from thee.

I think myself free when nobody contradicts me: when every one loves me, esteems me, and praises me; when I see, say, and hear, what I will; when I have all my conveniencies; and when I do nothing but what pleases me. But alas! I am very much deceived, I am never a greater slave; but am insensible of my slavery: for if in the midst of that licentiousness, or at the end of those pleasures I have given way to, thou happenest to touch my heart by some secret inspiration; if I am willing to converse with thee, O my God! then it is I feel the weight of my chains, find myself entangled with an infinite number of carnal bonds, which hinder me from elevating myself to thee, then I begin to know how I was blinded by my passions, and that what appeared liberty to me was a real slavery. O holy chains! O divine hands! deliver me from that false liberty, or rather from that true slavery, which permits me not to follow and love thee. Is it possible that I should ever have looked upon that as a *good*, which made me lose the *sovereign good*?

IV. Unhappy time! unfortunate hours! wherein I seemed free only for doing ill, wherein I was always a slave to myself and never to thee, O my only deliverer! Will that never change? Wilt thou still suffer long this subversion of order? When shall I behold myself free from my passions, and a captive to thy love? When wilt thou break the bonds which keep me bound to myself, and separated from thee?

O that I had never given my heart to any thing but to thee alone. But alas! not content with departing from thee, and joining myself to creatures, by my disorderly affections, I have bound thy sacred hands with cords much coarser than those wherewith the *Jews* pinioned thee. Those are the fettered hands, O my Jesus! which hold the devil a captive, break the chains of my vices, subject my enemies to me, and are always open to do me good. Thou continually offerest me thy graces, and I refuse them; and prefer the false pleasures of the world to thy eternal riches. Thus I shut up those liberal hands, and constrain them to remain so; thou art most sensibly affected therewith, O my God! out of the affection thou hast for me, and I find myself destitute of all good, by my ingratitude.

V. You

V. You withdraw not from me, O divine hands! always full of mercy, how unworthy soever I am of your blessings, your liberality is still infinitely greater than my unworthiness. Those chains which bind you, do not bind your power; make it appear on this ungrateful soul; since you were bound only to procure me liberty. *To thee I have lifted up my eyes, O my God! who dwellest in the heavens: behold as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters; as the eyes of the handmaid on the hands of her mistress: so are our eyes to our Lord God till he have mercy on us.* (Psal. cxxii. 12.)

Shut my eyes therefore, O sacred hands! that they may no longer see vanity. Guide my tongue, and all my senses, that they may remain subject to thy law: restrain this distracted heart, that it may not wander among creatures; and if I have fled from thee hitherto, O Lord! I now return to thee. If I have *broken thy yoke*, if I have *burst thy bonds*, and said: *I will not serve*, (Jer. ii. 20.) I change my mind and language, and give myself wholly to thee, in the simplicity of my heart. Take me, bind me, and fetter me as thou pleasest. The chains wherewith you shall load me, O divine hands! shall become a thousand times sweeter to me than liberty.

VI. I have sinned but too long: I have done hitherto whatsoever I would. It is time, O my God! that thou shouldst begin to do with me whatsoever thou wilt. O that I had never escaped out of thy hands! but those divine hands have formed me, and they will not reject me. Remember, O my God! that those divine hands have taken me from dust, to make me a living man, capable of knowing and loving thee. By them it is that I am what I am; and if there be any good in me, it is from them alone that I have it. *Thou batest nothing of those things which thou hast made.* (Wisd. xi. 25.) May the same love which delivered thee up to thy enemies, deliver me from mine. Preserve me, O Lord! purify me, reform thy work, lest I should deface it entirely.

Those pure souls, who by favour of thy light, contemplate on thee in this state, find in the beauty of thy chains the mitigation of their slavery, and the hope of their liberty. It is true that I have rendered myself unworthy of these divine communications; but after all I am no less thine when I have sinned, than if I had never done so. Acknowledge then, O my God! the work of thy hands: suffer me not to spoil it; deliver me from myself; and fix me for ever to thy law and service, by the chains of thy love.

VII. How easily dost thou subdue a heart, O divine love! when thou becomest sensible to it! How sweetly dost thou charm it, when thou discoverest to it a ray of thy divine beauty! The faithful soul,

in this place of banishment, where it only perceives thee through the obscurities of faith, elevates itself notwithstanding above itself, and above all the ties of the flesh and the world, by the secret sweetness which thou communicatest to it.

Thou bindest it sometimes so closely by the bonds of thy charity, that the *whole man*, even to his corporeal senses, finds himself as it were transformed into thee; because thou employest every thing to draw the soul to thee. If it sleeps, thou awakest it; if it rests, thou occupiest it; if it eats, thou deprivest it of the relish of corporeal food; if it converses with men, thou makest it retire within itself; thou keepest it wholly captive, deprivest it of every thing, and forbiddest it every thing out of a holy jealousy: and as thou givest thyself wholly to it, so thou wouldst have it be wholly thine. It esteems itself happy in its dependence, and free in its captivity; because it lives in thee and by thee.

Sweet captivity! amiable chains! why do you leave me at liberty? Thou drawest to thee, and retainest in thee those whom thou lovest, O divine love! thou bindest them, and strippest them. They carry a pure heart in a terrestrial body, and thou changeest them entirely into thyself by the power of thy spirit. Can he who is bound with thee desire any other freedom? How much at large is he! how free is he! and how content is he!

Thou knowest, O sacred God of love! how precious thy chains are, and that the heart which sighs after them, cannot express what it feels. Be not reserved in regard of me: for though thou shouldst give me all thou possessest without thyself, thou wouldst give me nothing of what I desire; and if thou leavest me at liberty, thou punishest me cruelly. Seize me therefore, bind me for ever, O my Jesus, my love, and my all!

VIII. But what dost thou in those souls whom thou holdest captive, O divine love! Let him that experiences it, declare it, if he can! What I feel, is that my soul, when thou touchest it, wishes for that happy state wherein thou shewest, in so admirable a manner, the power of thy grace in the weakness of our nature. When after having made thyself master of the faculties of the soul, thou happenest to hide thyself, and to withdraw the sweetness of thy presence, without ceasing however to keep them bound, then can they neither contradict thee, nor desire any comfort besides thee; because their only consolation is to suffer, and to remain thus bound to thee.

How

How divine is this operation, O thou life and love of my soul! Those whom thou deprivest thus of all interior consolation, are afraid of exterior consolations: they shun their friends, presume not to think of any creature, nor even to ask thee to comfort them; and they are capable of nothing but a willingness to drink thy cup as thou didst drink it. O how admirable is the manner after which thou reignest in those hearts! they fly from consolation, as others fly from pain; and they are afraid of being separated from thee, when they are not still on the cross, as weak souls think themselves abandoned, when they no longer feel the sweetness of thy communications.

Those whom thou hast interiorly bound, are truly free; because they will not possess thee but in such a manner as thou art pleased to give thyself to them. As they find their repose only in thy good pleasure, so they seek thee according to thy will, and not according to their own: and desiring above all things to see thee reign in them with an absolute power, they give themselves to thee without any condition or reserve. They desire to be free, only that they may be always in readiness to love and suffer, to enjoy thee and to part with thee, to possess thee and to be deprived of thee, according to thy eternal designs: being men according to nature, but more than men in the works of thy grace and love. Amiable bonds! happy slavery! O that I were chained in that manner!

But if my misery hinders me from being a slave to love, O my God! may I be so at least to hope. Thou art, O my Jesus! a secure haven; where being fatigued with the storms of this world, I may find a sweet retreat. Thou art true in thy promises, rich in thy mercies, liberal in thy graces, and constant in thy love. Seize me, O Lord! bind me, and take me away with all my hopes. May I always keep my eyes turned towards thee; may I advance continually towards thee; may I sigh only after thee, and may I find rest in nothing but thee alone, O my love! my life! and the only hope of my soul!

Most pure Virgin, you who have always been a captive to the love of Jesus, and always free in him; obtain me the grace of bearing his chains constantly, and of being eternally a slave to his love. Blessed spirits, who in the very abode of sovereign freedom, are bound by the chains of an eternal love, break my chains, and deliver my soul from shameful slavery under which it groans; that I may remain fixed to the divine beauty which ye behold. *Amen.*

XXIX. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

He is dragged before the tribunals of Jerusalem.

OUR Lord being in the hands of his enemies, was pleased to suffer all the pains he was capable of at that time: that of seeing himself ignominiously dragged before the several tribunals of his unjust and exasperated judges, was none of the least considerable. For was it not a very great indignity, that the Sovereign Judge of the living and dead, should appear before criminal men; and that the master of the universe should be subject to the judgment of his creatures? without being also dragged from one tribunal to another, abandoned to all the hatred and injustice of his declared enemies?

Can we consider, without astonishment, the only Son of God, the Son of justice, and holiness itself, before whom all nature trembles, at whose voice the graves give up their dead, the devils depart from the possessed, and the raging seas become calm; whom the leprosy, and all diseases, heaven, earth, and hell, obey without resistance; in whom every thing commands respect; whose modesty, gravity, and admirable sweetness, shine even in the midst of chains; can we, I say, consider this Man-God, after giving so many proofs of his Divinity, with his hands bound, a cord about his neck, led as a criminal before his judges, dragged from one to another, that some one may be found amongst them that may condemn him; and not admire the depth of the divine counsels?

II. He appeared then before all those tribunals, with an unchangeable patience and tranquillity of mind. He endeavoured not to withdraw himself from justice, or, to speak better, from the ill-will of his accusers and judges, who treated him with so much contempt, that he was not so much as judged worthy of having any form of judgment observed against him. *We have seen him*, says the Prophet *Isaiab*, liii. 2. *despised, and most abject of men—and his look as it were hid and despised*, so much was he covered with confusion. They were intent on nothing less than on doing him justice. Those judges of iniquity thought of nothing but satisfying the hatred wherewith they were animated against him; and he received nothing but affronts every where.

III. He was led before four judges, *Annas, Caiphas, Pilate, and Herod*; the two first were *Jews*, and the other *Gentiles*. Some fa-
ther

thers affirm, that in going from the garden of *Olives* to *Jerusalem*, he was dragged so rudely, that he fell into the torrent of *Cedron*, over which he was to pass; and on this occasion they apply to him those words of *David*, Ps. cix. 7. *Of the torrent in the way he shall drink; therefore shall he exalt the head.* But however it be, it is certain, that this violence was very agreeable to the malice of the *Jews*.

It was about midnight when they entered into the city, whose repose they disturbed; and when the day appeared, it was filled with the noise of that event. Some were surprised that they had apprehended a man powerful in works and words, who did good to every one; others openly blamed his conduct; and all expected, with impatience, the end of that tragedy.

They went first to the house of *Annas*, by order of *Caiphas*, who would pay that deference to his father-in law. *Annas* first interrogated Christ concerning his disciples; he asked him, in a scornful manner, why they had left him thus alone, being accustomed to follow him in a crowd; and added, that the world would presently see what opinion they ought to have both of the master and disciples; but *Jesus was silent*, and interiorly resigned his justification to the Eternal Father, who was to make known to the world, in proper time, the innocence of his son. *Matt. xxvi. 63.*

IV. They questioned him afterwards concerning his Doctrine, in an artful manner; but he answered, that it was in vain to interrogate him thereon; that he had spoken publicly in the temple; and that those who had heard him, could give testimony of his Doctrine. Behold what the security of a good conscience is! as it is plain and sincere in its words and actions, so it does not believe it has any ground to fear, or to speak much in its own defence; because the truth and its own conduct speak for it.

Those who defend themselves with so much pains, are not commonly found so just before God, as they are desirous of appearing to be before men; and every thing they make use of for justifying themselves, often serves only to make people believe they are guilty. As good actions and pure intentions alone are capable of justifying us before God, so when they are wanting, God permits human eloquence to become unprofitable to us, even before men; and them to judge according to their own views, and not according to those we would inspire them with. Thus the surest way is to put our confidence in God, and to expect our justification from him alone.

One of the attendants having heard Jesus's answer, struck him, saying, *Answerest thou in this manner the high priest?* Then Jesus said to that man, without being moved; *If I have spoken ill, bear testimony of the evil; but if well, why dost thou strike me?* John xviii, 22, 23. Behold how they did justice to our Saviour; he was not permitted to speak the truth; and a scoundrel presumed to strike him in the presence of the judge, who, instead of reprehending him, approved of an action that would not have been suffered amongst the most barbarous nations.

V. Jesus was sent from *Annas* to *Caiphas*, where the principal of the *Jews*, the *Pharisees*, and the *Priests*, were assembled. As he had received a blow in the house of the first judge, so he was charged with false accusations in the house of the second; treated as a blasphemer; declared worthy of death; and shut up in prison, till he was brought before *Pilate*; and from thence to *Herod*; whence, after being exposed and looked upon as a fool, he was led back again to *Pilate*.

Pilate, though he had judged our Saviour innocent, caused him nevertheless to be most cruelly scourged, crowned with thorns, and at last crucified between two thieves. What a procedure! what justice! Jesus suffered all that without complaining; he even spoke but a very few words, and these were not in his own defence; and he suffered himself to be thus accused, judged and ill-treated, without answering any thing, so far as to lose his honour and life,

VI. This affliction was still greatly augmented, by the offences which he saw committed against his Father, and by the inflexible obstinacy of his persecutors, which was by so much the more sensible to him, as he loved them most tenderly. For he considered what they did against him, as their unhappiness, rather than his own; and the height of his sorrow was to foresee, that what he endured for their salvation, would only serve to render them more guilty, and more unhappy.

He knew, that in quality of sovereign judge of the living and dead, he should one day be obliged to pronounce a terrible sentence against his own judges, and to condemn those to eternal death, whom he would have saved by his own blood. He saw them shut their eyes, with an extreme obstinacy, against the light; and their ears, against all the truths he taught them. None but those that knew the heart of Jesus, and the perfection of his love, can comprehend how much easier it was for him to suffer their injustice, than to see himself obliged to condemn them one day, for the

the crimes they were then committing, and which they were not to expiate by penance.

VII. But our Saviour, who knows how to bring good out of evil, drew from those corrupt tribunals, a wonderful advantage for the confirmation of those sacred truths which he had taught us: For as those judges, by the bad dispositions of their hearts, easily believed the lies, calumnies, and false testimonies, wherewith they endeavoured to blacken the innocence of Christ; the wickedness of his enemies served only to give a greater lustre to the purity of his doctrine, and sanctity of his works.

Malice at this time was seen to break loose; envy to spread its poison; and hatred to feed itself with injuries, affronts, exclamations, and murmurings: nevertheless Jesus suffered all with a meekness always equal; and the rage of those impious people was the proof of his innocence. Thus the truth appeared without his speaking; and his silence alone confounded perfidy; because darkness cannot prevail against the light, nor malice against perfect sanctity, nor falshood against the eternal truth. But the Son of God was pleased to pass through all these tribunals; and be judged according to the utmost rigour, in order to shew the whole world, that there was nothing in him but what was pure, holy, and perfect; and to confirm us by his very enemies, in the truth and purity of his doctrine.

VIII. Here is a great instruction for those, who, on account of the rank they hold in the world, or of the good opinion they have of their own merit, or of some other human reason, cannot bear that he, whom they think below themselves, should undertake to judge them. It is of those persons our Lord has said; *John iii. 20. for every one that doth evil, hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd.* Indeed, he who will not be judged by his inferiors, gives room for imagining, that he confides more in the dignity of his person, than in the goodness of his works. If you be not just, acknowledge it before God, and seek not to appear so before men; because you have a judge *that searcheth the hearts*; and sees with how little justice you pass for a virtuous man. Now if you be just, take it not amiss that you are judged. If you deserve any reproach, think not on exculpating yourself for your own satisfaction; and if you deserve none, wait with patience, till the truth manifests itself.

Though your judges should even be so corrupt as to give you a just reason for suspecting their judgment, consider what advantage it is for a christian to resemble Christ, and to suffer injustice with him.

him. We may assure ourselves, that if we refer our concerns to him, he will either discover our innocence by ways unknown to us, or, if he permits the malice of our enemies to prevail, it is a sign that he reserves the chastisement thereof to himself, that he designs to sanctify us by patience, and that he will one day in his universal judgment, in the sight of all men, restore us to the honour that we were unjustly deprived of, in the presence of a few persons.

IX. Christ teaches us by that silence which all admire, few comprehend, and scarce any imitate; to resign ourselves so to God, as for the love of him to desire no other justification, when we are accused, but silence. He that sincerely seeks the peace of heart, the hatred of himself, and the pure love of God, can alone comprehend how ill those hours are employed that are bestowed on the care of his honour; what treasures are found in his own confusion; what is gained by the loss of his reputation before men; and what is lost by gaining their esteem. I know the law of God does not oblige us to this perfection; but I know also, very well, how happy that man is, who sincerely endeavours to imitate Christ, in what he sees to be most perfect in him.

The prophet *Isaiab*, liii. 3, 8. considering the profound humiliation of our Saviour before his judges, says, that being *despised, and the most abject of men—whereupon neither have they esteemed him.* And then he adds these words, *Who shall declare his generation?* If therefore the silence of Christ has produced so many saints, so many solitaries, and so many peaceful souls; and if it has been for christians so plentiful a source of interior graces, can we practise it, with a sincere desire of imitating that divine Saviour, without drawing from thence admirable fruits of sanctity? O that God would discover this truth to all men! That he would make us feel the peace and riches of that soul, that enters sincerely into the way of this perfect mortification, we should find a paradise on earth. But let the man that has not yet been enlightened with this light, and that looks upon silence in persecution, as an insuperable difficulty, endeavour at least to be calm and moderate in speaking in his own defence, and put more confidence in God than in his own justice.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ being dragged before the tribunals of Jerusalem.

IS that thy place, O Jesus! thou goest then no longer through the villages of *Judea*, to teach thy doctrine, and work miracles in them! But would it not at least be more convenient for thee to come into our hearts, there to be loved, acknowledged, and adored, than to go before those impious tribunals, where thou receivest nothing but affronts? May heaven and earth praise thee, O my God! may all creatures bless thee, and may all hearts love thee, for having humbled thyself so far for me. It is I that am guilty, and thou that art accused, judged, and condemned! I adore the excess of thy love; I am to be judged only by thee alone, and thou submittest thyself for my sake, to all the unjust judgments of the world; and most innocent as thou art, thou art willing to suffer what I deserve.

There is no judge can be too severe on my account, nor condemn me to such great punishments; but that I still deserve greater: and there is no judge, O my Saviour! that can be equitable enough towards thee, nor shew all the respect and love which is due to thee. And because I have reason to be afraid of the worst; if I am not judged with mercy, thou thyself hast been pleased to be my judge, O divine goodness! thou hast been pleased to take upon thyself the sins I have committed, and to undergo the sentence I have deserved.

II. It was I, O my God! and not thee, that ought to have appeared before these judges. There is nothing they can justly reprehend in thy infinite sanctity; but they might discharge all their hatred upon me without injustice. They should find in me what they seek for in thee; and they might execute against me, without any crime, what they undertake so unjustly against thee. They might pull out my eyes, to punish the freedom of my looks; cut out my tongue which has spoken so much ill; tear into pieces this body loaded with sins; pierce this heart which has not loved thee; condemn my actions ever contrary to thy law; and take from me a life, which I have not employed in thy service.

If they seek a sacrilegious person, that has abused every thing that is most holy; a malefactor which the world ought to be freed from, I am that wretch. But thou, O infinite mercy! who lovest me, how unworthy soever I am of thy love; and who sincerely desirest

desirest my salvation, thou bearest with me, and reservest me for thy paternal judgment; whilst thou deliverest thyself up to the hatred of those impious judges, who have resolved thy destruction; and thou wilt be condemned, that I may be absolved.

What shall I say, O my sovereign judge! of that exchange, which can only proceed from an infinite goodness? Thou knowest for whom thou dost so? permit not so great a mercy, O Lord! to be unprofitable to me. Lead my heart with thee, before the tribunals of those wicked judges; enlighten it with those sacred truths thou there teachest; communicate to it, those divine virtues which thou there practisest; and inflame it with thy love, that it may adore and love thee, amidst those blasphemies and affronts which thou there sufferest.

III. Cruel and unjust judges! if ye knew him, whom ye have in your hands, ye would immediately change places with him. Ye yourselves would look upon him as your judge, and, prostrate at his feet, ye would implore his mercy. But there is no justice for thee, O my God! on thy account alone, all laws are violated, and all judges are corrupted. Teach me, O Lord! this divine wisdom, so unknown to the world; that in imitation of thee, I may overcome by silence, triumph by meekness, and thus be justified before thee, when I am judged unjustly by men.

But I am so guilty, O my Saviour! that every thing which I behold thee suffer, condemns me. I am worse than thy judges; for in fine, they knew thee not, adored thee not; and I that know thee, adore thee, believe thy doctrine, and praise and admire thy works, I resist thy will, condemn thy law, and subject thee to the judgment of as many wicked judges, as I have disorderly affections.

How many times have I failed in the respect I owe thee, O divine majesty! though I knew thou wast within me, and madest me sensible of thy presence? Was it not giving thee blows, as that impious soldier did, when I thus stifled thy voice, and obliged thee to be silent, to allow my concupiscence to speak? How many times like *Anas* the high-priest, have I condemned thy doctrine, to justify my own passions? How many times have I esteemed as folly, what thou teachest concerning the contempt of the world; and dishonoured such pure truths by false judgments, in order to follow the corruption of my heart.

Mercy, O Lord! mercy; I am loaded with sins, and thou art innocence itself: nevertheless thou art silent, and I justify myself.

Thou

Thou sufferest without complaining, all the injustice of thy enemies; and I complain of the least injuries. Thou lovest even those that treat thee so unworthily, so far as to die for them; and as for me, I spend my life in the sentiments of bitterness and hatred, when people do not pay me the respects which my pride requires without reason. Thou permittest every one to judge thee, and I am unwilling to be judged by any one.

When shall I find my heart changed, O infinite goodness! When shall I have thee continually before my eyes, O thou spouse of my soul! that I may imitate thee in all things? and when shall I take greater care to be like thee, than to please men?

IV. May the vain presumption I have of myself, come now to an end, O my God, my Saviour, and my master! I confess my ingratitude and pride in thy presence: I desire with thy grace to imitate thee, and to suffer in silence all manner of pains; there are none but what thou sendest, or permittest; and I ought to adore every thing in thee, even thy permissions. I consent, from this moment, that all creatures should rise up against me, to revenge the crimes which I have committed against thee.

I know very well, that if thou hadst not restrained them, O my God! they should have been already armed, to destroy a perfidious and ungrateful wretch, such as I am. But since thou art pleased to defend me, permit me no longer to be thy enemy. Begin this day to convert me, and to transform me into thee, O sovereign perfection! make me love those that ill-treat me, condemn me, and tear me in pieces; since therein consists the divine wisdom which thou teachest.

The prophet *Isaiab* was seized with astonishment, when he beheld in spirit those admirable fruits of humility, which thou producest in souls, by submitting thyself, with so much meekness, to such corrupt judges. But what ground is there to wonder, if a sinner like me, should humble himself before his judge, after seeing his judge annihilate himself before sinners? Nevertheless I do it not, and I cannot even do it but by thy grace. Work therefore in me, O Lord! what thou requirest of me, that when thou seekest me, thou mayest always find me ready to accomplish thy will in all things.

V. How rich is he, who for thy love, O my Jesus! beholds himself loaded with chains, despised by the world, dishonoured in all places, condemned by all men; and who, amidst all these reproaches, finds himself supported by thy example, calm, meek, and

and content by the unction of thy spirit, united to thee by a pure charity; how rich is he, I say, how happy is he! When is it that my whole interior shall sincerely say unto thee, O my God, my sovereign good, my abundance, and plenitude! come into my heart, come to this miserable sinner, that earnestly desires thee to establish thy abode in it?

Is it not time for thee to leave the houses of those judges enraged against thee? If thou delightest to be with the wicked, I am more wicked than they. If thou seekest humiliation, thou wilt find enough of it with me. If thou goest voluntarily where there are sinners to be converted, and faults to be corrected, thou shalt have in me, whereon to exercise thy zeal. If thou hast a design to bestow any grace upon me, come, O Lord! come thyself; thou alone art sufficient for me. Enter into my heart, O pure light; there it is I shall know thee, adore thee, love thee, and embrace thee; and I shall not say with *Jacob*, (*Gen xxxii. 26.*) *I will not let thee go, unless thou blest me*; but with thy spouse, (*Cant. iii. 4.*) *I held him; neither will I let him go*. When wilt thou come, O my God! when shall I behold thee, O thou light of my eyes! O my love, and my joy!

If the fruit of an unjust sentence pronounced against thee, and received by thee with so much meekness and humility, be, according to what *Isaiab* foretold, *liii. 11*, to find many lost sheep, many strayed souls, many children that love thee, many blind that know thee, and many sinners that desire and possess thee; consider that I am gone farthest astray, and am lost the most of any of thy sheep; seek me, O Lord! call me back, put me into the way again, and keep me near thee, O charitable shepherd! I acknowledge thee, adore thee, and will love thee with all my heart; purify me, conduct me, and render me such as thou wouldst have me to be.

VI. How well am I in thy hands, O my Saviour! and how art thou in the hands of thy enemies! Seeing thyself before them loaded with chains, thou saidst nothing for thy defence; and though they violated all the rules of justice on thy account, thou resignedst thyself to their judgment, as if thou hadst expected thy safety from thence. And as for me, I dare not resign myself to thee, O judge full of goodness! I can always speak to thee, complain to thee, be heard, and obtain mercy. My cause even becomes better when it is in thy hands, and yet I am so blind as to fly from thee, and to prefer the judgments of the world to thine.

All men seek to injure me; there is only thou, O my judge and father both! that seekest to do me good, and givest me every thing

that is necessary for meriting a favourable sentence upon myself. Ought I to have departed from thee? I return to thee, O Lord! I submit and resign myself to thee: receive me in thy arms; inclose me in thy heart; unite me to thy spirit; and subject me to thy will; that, for the future, I may live only in thee, and for thee; that I may hate myself, and that I may always love thee, O my God, my judge, my shepherd, and my only hope!

O most pure mother of God! our divine Saviour has always reigned in you, and found no perfect repose here below, but in you alone. You are the advocate of sinners, assist him that presents himself before you; open your maternal heart to me, and obtain for me of your son the grace to comprehend those divine truths which he teaches me so well, that for the future they may be the rule of my conduct. O celestial court! ye who continually behold the greatness of this humbled God, and enjoy in security the fruit of his labours; beg of him, for me, the spirit with which ye are filled, that I may deserve, by his humiliations, to have a share in the glory which ye possess. *Amen.*

XXX. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

The false witnesses.

OUR Lord was treated no better in *Caiphas's* house, than he had been at *Annas*. He there suffered many injustices, by the false accusations they laid against him. It cannot be comprehended, without having experienced it, how sensible this pain is to an upright and innocent heart. The *Jews* were assembled at the high-priest's house, where they impatiently expected news from those whom they had sent to seize our Saviour, being in a continual fear, lest he should escape from their hands. But when they understood the success of that enterprise, they were over-joyed; their joy was still augmented at the sight of the prisoner who was brought to them, and they expressed it by their loud acclamations.

They interrogated him at first, concerning his life and doctrine; but both the one and the other were so holy and irreproachable, that all the malice of his enemies could find nothing reprehensible therein. So they raised up false witness against him, that they might, by falsehood, give some colour of justice to the sentence of death, which they retolved to pronounce against him.

II. They

II. They laid many false accusations against him, as of having blasphemed against the temple of God, by saying, he could destroy it, and rebuild it in three days; though he only *spoke of the temple of his body*, (John ii. 21.) and they themselves had understood him so; since they afterwards demanded soldiers of *Pilate*, to guard the sepulchre of Christ; because he had promised to arise again the third day.

Others accused him of having forbidden to pay tribute to *Cæsar*, although he had on the contrary clearly decided, that they ought to render to *Cæsar*, the things that are *Cæsar's* (Matt. xxii. 21.) and had made St. *Peter* find in a fish's belly, the money they had need of, for satisfying that obligation. Some accused him of having made himself a king; although every one knew he had hid himself, when five thousand men, whom he had miraculously fed in the desert, would have given him that quality.

They also imputed to him many other such crimes, without any appearance of truth. But the less guilty they found him, the more desirous they were to destroy him; and being unable to discover any spot in so pure a light, or the least irregularity in such holy actions, they endeavoured by interrogating him, to surprise him in his words. *Answerest thou nothing*, said *Caiphas* to him, *to the things which these men witness against thee?* But *Jesus was silent*; (Matt. xxvi. 62.) because he knew how unprofitable it had been for him to speak; and he would not say, or do any thing, that could hinder the accomplishment of the sacrifice, which he so earnestly desired. He would also teach us by his example, that we ought to despise the malice of men, when the purity of our conscience sets him on our side, who is the invincible defence, and sure refuge of his servants.

III. *Caiphas*, seeing he could not oblige our Saviour to break silence, made use of the most efficacious of all means for making him speak, which was the name of God. *I adjure thee by the living God*, said he to him, *that thou tell us if thou art the Christ, the Son of God* (Matt. xxvi. 63.) This demand was such, as there was reason to hope, that an answer would change the high-priest's hatred into adoration; and that far from condemning Christ, he would condemn himself to weep all his life, for what he had already committed against him. But when the human heart is once determined to evil, it turns into poison every thing that might be capable of healing it. God was pleased nevertheless, by a wise disposition of his eternal counsel, to make use of an instrument as unworthy as that wicked high-priest was, for giving occasion to Christ to declare more clearly, than he had yet done, the divinity of his

his person, in the presence of his cruellest enemies, and to leave us before his death, so necessary a certainty of what he was.

At these words of the high-priest, our Saviour having more regard to the name of God, whereby he was adjured to speak, and to the advantage of his church which he was pleased to instruct, than to all the evil his answer might draw upon himself, answered clearly; *thou hast said it: nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven*, (Matt. xxvi. 64.) For though those impious persons be not destined to see the divine essence for ever, yet they shall all one day see the humanity of Christ sitting at the right hand of God, encompassed with glory and majesty, coming to judge his own judges, with as much confusion to them as joy to the good.

Caiphas, who had not interrogated our Saviour in order to believe in him, but to have an occasion of condemning him, having heard this answer, rent his garments, according to the custom of the Jews, who shewed thereby their great indignation, and cried out; *he has blasphemed: what need we any more witnesses? behold now you have heard the blasphemy; what is your opinion? They answered and said: he is guilty of death*; to which they had long before resolved to condemn him. (Matt. xxvi. 65, 66.)

IV. But this cause did not yet appear sufficient to them for crucifying him, according to the design they had formed thereof: for as it was not permitted them according to the law to put any one to death, they needed the authority of *Pontius Pilate*, who being a *Gentile*, and an idolater, would not have much regard to the law and religion of the Jews. Thus seeing that they could not obtain what they desired, but by supposititious crimes; and as that of his having blasphemed, by calling himself the son of God, would make no great impression on the mind of *Pilate*, they resolved to add two others thereto, which were manifestly capital. The one was of having forbidden to pay tribute to *Cæsar*; and the other, of having raised a sedition among the people, by designing to make himself king. They also aggravated these two falsities before the *Roman* president, with great exclamations; whilst Christ said not so much as one single word for his own defence, according to these words of *Isaiab*; *As a sheep to the slaughter shall he be led, and as a lamb before his shearer, he shall be dumb; and shall not open his mouth*, (liii. 7.)

Let any one judge by himself, how sensible this pain was to Christ, and what his patience was. For we often see, that he who

has undergone great labours and very sharp pains, with an invincible constancy, rises up against false witnesses. It is rare to see a man suffer them without complaint; and there are very few virtues that are proof against great calumnies. When a servant of God does so much as to suffer them in silence, it is because he acknowledges the infinite obligations he has to Christ, and finding in himself a great number of sins, he suffers false ones to be laid to his charge, in order to expiate those that are true. But our Saviour knowing no sin in himself, and having no obligation to those for whom he suffered, he could not have borne those false accusations, but purely out of the love he had for us all.

V. This trial is so severe, that persons fearing God, and unwilling to allow themselves the least desire of revenge, have not the strength of restraining their complaints, when any evil is imputed to them, which they have not done. We sometimes see men, otherwise very mortified, and who yield without difficulty to all the reasons there are of suffering other crosses, defend themselves against this, so far as to think themselves obliged in conscience, for the glory of God, the honour of virtue, the hindrance of scandal, and preserving their authority, to undeceive the world, and even to engage, under pretence of zeal, the powers of the world in their justification.

I know very well that Christ forbids us not to justify ourselves, nor obliges us to such great perfection; although he practised it first; but he who professes to follow him, ought to be persuaded, that this divine Saviour has given us no example of virtue, in what regards morality, but what may be imitated, how perfect and heroic soever it may appear to us.

And let none say, that there are strong reasons which prove the contrary: for besides that, they will always appear weak, in comparison of those which the Holy Ghost interiorly suggests to pure souls, this truth is confirmed by the actions of apostolical men, and by the lives of the most illustrious Saints. Let those therefore who do not yet relish so sublime a doctrine, humble themselves before God, whose goodness compassionates their weakness, by being unwilling to oblige them strictly to so great a purity of virtue; but let them esteem it in others, and desire it for themselves, with so much the more earnestness as they find themselves the more remote from it.

VI. Let us learn from this divine master, that the true means of preserving our honour, is to lead a life so holy, as to give no cause of scandal to our neighbour: for according to St. *Augustin*, (*Ep.* 204

ad Donat.) he is cruel, who being content with the testimony of his own conscience, neglects his reputation. That holy doctor would not have us seek it with eagerness, nor lose it with pain; but to preserve it carefully, by the examples of a good life, exterior modesty, an interior communication with God, meekness, silence, patience in adversity, an observation of the divine law, application to the duties of one's state, an inclination to do good, an aversion to evil, and other virtues, thereby to gain the esteem of men, without its being sought for, and confound slander and detraction.

Thus it was that the malice of the *Jews* was confounded; without our Saviour's saying one single word in his own justification; and he that follows this way, shall always walk securely.

I own, that to suffer calumny without answering any thing, and to defend ourselves only by silence, is a secret difficulty to be comprehended, and known by few. It is true, it is a great perfection, and that the feeble heart of man cannot attain at so sublime a state, without a singular grace; but it must be owned also, that this happy state is full of celestial blessings, and established in a region of divine peace, *which surpasses all understanding*, (Phil. iv. 7.) No one can express it, but he that has the experience thereof. It is sufficient to mention here, by way of conclusion to this discourse, that Christ suffered this pain, which perhaps was the greatest of his life, with a virtue so much the more admirable, as it is the less known; and that he has promised to all those who shall imitate him in this heroic silence, a throne of glory, upon which they shall judge their enemies.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ bearing the false witnesses of the Jews.

O JESUS, the glory of the just, their way, truth, and life! there is no injustice but what thou hast endured for my sake. Thou hast even permitted false witnesses to rise up against thee, O Eternal Truth! I adore thee, O sovereign Purity! I adore thee, only Son of the Eternal Father! O my God, my King, and my Lord! Has the world found any fault in thee? could it say any thing against thee, without falsehood and blasphemy? And yet thy enemies will have it that thy doctrine is erroneous, and thy actions irregular. How contrary is this kind of injury to what thou art, O divine word!

word! But how admirable is thy patience! Ought not what I see thee suffer to make me love thy reproaches, and give me joy, when I am so happy as to be treated like thee?

How different I find myself from thee, O my Saviour! how sensible am I of every thing that is said against my honour, and how soon do I lose the consideration of thee, whenever I am accused of any fault which I have not committed, and which can hurt my reputation. I therefore chuse rather, O model of all perfection! to be esteemed by the world than to resemble thee. The world cannot without calumny accuse thee of any fault, because there is none in thee. But even when it imposes a false crime upon me, thou beholdest an infinite number of true ones in me, that would justly convict me.

II. Thou knowest, O my God! who penetratest the bottom of hearts, that if the world beheld, as thou dost, the abominations of my thoughts and desires, I should be to it an object of horror and contempt. In what manner soever it behaves in regard of me, what false crime soever it lays to my charge, it treats me always mildly, in comparison of what it would do, if it knew all the hidden crimes which I confess before thee, all thy bounties, and all my ingratitude. Although thou hidest my shame from it, which thou mightest discover to it, my pride is so great, that I still esteem myself, always seek to justify myself before men, cannot bear the least reflection upon my reputation, blush to be like thee, and think myself humbled when I endure without complaining, some little contempt, after having seen thee loaded with reproaches.

Thou teachest me to defend my honour only by purity of conscience, innocency of life, sanctity of manners, and patience in injuries. And I, with a conscience, such as thou beholdest, destitute of virtue and merits, would defend myself by my impatience and words, and do myself an honour by such a justification as thou hast commanded me to despise. Have mercy on me, O Lord! permit me not to follow any other way than that which thou hast shewn me. Imprint deeply in my heart the truth which thou teachest me, and make me comprehend how necessary it is for me.

III. Destroy in me, O Lord! all the esteem I have for myself, and of the sentiments of the world. Am I not very blind and miserable, to esteem in this life what thou hast despised! I sometimes imagine I labour for thy glory, when I am seeking my own; and I flatter myself that thou wouldst be offended, if I should suffer a calumny without justifying myself. Where then is my reason? where is my wisdom? If thine be true, O Lord! as I cannot doubt

of it; and if I adore it in thee, why am I not willing to imitate it? and if it be clear, how comes it that I walk in darkness? Why am I not persuaded, that by keeping silence, by suffering for thy sake, by resigning to thy providence the care of my reputation, I shall acquire more glory, virtue will be honoured more, and truth better known, than if I were to make a great deal of noise for defending it?

Permit me to ask thee, O Sovereign Reason! O Eternal Wisdom! where is that light so resplendent and so hidden at the same time? it is concealed from me by a thick cloud; I believe it, but I see it not, because all its splendor is included in thee. It is not discovered, nor relished but by the love and experience which thou givest thereof to those who are truly touched with the desire of imitating thee. Give me therefore, O my God! that love which alone makes one comprehend those truths which are so sublime, and far above all human understanding. Teach me to resign myself to thee with a pure and generous faith, that I may behold that divine light, follow it, and be always enlightened thereby.

IV. When I shall endeavour to become like thee, what evil shall befall me thereby? What is this world? what obligations have I to it? what good can it do me? and why shall I be ashamed of imitating thee, out of a desire of pleasing it? The world judges blindly; it approves and condemns without reason; it looks upon thy servants as its enemies; it makes promises and keeps them not; it flatters us only to destroy us; and gives us nothing but the vain smoke of honour, which is dissipated in an instant; but the glory thou givest, O my God! is eternal like thyself.

Thou promisest, and art always faithful in thy promises; thou art incorruptible in thy judgments, and liberal in thy rewards. Thou heapest blessings on those who suffer for thee, and makest those who are desirous of walking after thee, sensible of the ineffable sweetness of thy spirit, and nevertheless I fly from thee, in order to follow the world; I prefer its glory to thine, and chuse rather to subject myself to the vanity of human opinions, than to the truth of thy words.

How long shall this disorder continue, O Infinite Mercy! and when shall I see in my soul the change thou desirest therein? There is nothing in me, O my God! that can make me deserve the glory of resembling thee, and I am worthy of nothing but the torments which thou endurest for me. Change my heart, O omnipotent

potent Father! I am ashamed of seeing myself so contrary to thee and of not esteeming as much as I ought, the divine truth which thou teachest me.

V. But behold, O Lord! the resolution I make this day. I resolve, with the help of thy grace, to bear for the future all false witnesses, all calumnies, and all injuries which shall be laid upon me. I pardon all those, with all my heart, that have offended me, or that shall ever offend me: I dispense them, for thy sake, with restoring me the honour which they have deprived me of, and desire to have no other than that of serving thee. Permit not, O my God! any person to be punished, for having abused me. Render to my persecutors good for the evil they have done me; and give them thy love for the hatred they have borne me.

But if this desire be not yet so generous and extensive as thou desirest it, dilate my heart by thy charity. Hide not the rays of thy light from me; mollify my obduracy; destroy in me every sentiment of bitterness and revenge; that I may love thee without reserve, and love in thee all those that persecute me. Give me, or destroy in me the esteem of men, according as it shall be more proper for thy glory: but in such a manner, that thou mayst take out of my heart the esteem of myself: and that, if it be necessary for thy service I should have some reputation, I may lose the sincere desire of contempt and humiliations.

VI. But what do thy enemies say against thee, O infinite purity? Grant, O Lord! that whilst those impious persons judge ill of thee, I may acknowledge and adore thee for what thou art. They say thou madest thyself the Son of God, and accuse thee of a sacrilegious usurpation. They are deceived, O my Sovereign Good! it is not falsity that thou takest upon thyself the quality of the Son of God: for thou art truly God of God, begotten from all eternity in the bosom of God the Father. For my part, O Lord, prostrate before thy divine majesty, hidden under that sacred humanity, where-with thou vouchsafedst to be clothed for my salvation; I adore thee with all the faith and all the love I am capable of, as the true Son of God, as the Eternal Almighty God, infinitely wise, infinitely good, and infinitely great, equal in all things to God thy Father.

Whatever those blind wretches say of thee, thou art my happiness, treasure, greatness, and glory. The cherubims and seraphims greatly adore thee; all the celestial court acknowledge thee; and I who am but a worm of the earth, join myself to them, and to all creatures, and reverence thee as my God, and as the only Son

Son of the eternal Father. Thy works manifest thee sufficiently; thy miracles make all nature sensible of what thou art; there is only the malice and blindness of men that knows thee not.

But when thou discoverest to my heart, that is totally blind, a ray of thy divine light, O eternal beauty! ah, how clearly does it then see that thou art the true Son of God! and in how comfortable a manner does the impression of thy Spirit give me the experience of this truth! When will that happy day come, when my soul, charmed with thy beauty, shall say to thee: thou art my God, my Lord, and my love! When will the moment come, when I shall be able to love nothing, and esteem nothing besides thee, O my sovereign good, and the center of my repose!

VII. Thou art judged worthy of death, because thou madest thyself king! Alas, O Lord! thou never hadst any mark of royalty on earth; and thou always concealedst thyself, lest thou mightest appear what thou wast. But when the sea became firm under thy feet, and calm at the least sign of thy will; when death and the graves obeyed thy voice; when the devils departed by thy command from the bodies of the possessed; when diseases gave way to thy power; did not all creatures, though insensible, acknowledge thee for their king? I acknowledge thee also for mine, O divine Jesus! and adore thee as my sovereign Lord and Redeemer.

Thou governest me by thy wisdom, chastisest me by thy justice, pardonest me by thy mercy, instructest me by thy law, enrichest me by thy liberality, and defendest me by thy power. How comes it then that the *Jews* look upon thee as a mock king? Do not the prodigies thou workest sufficiently shew thy sovereign power; and do not the devils themselves confess it?

But since those foolish people will not have thee to reign over them, come, O Lord! and reign over me; establish thy empire in my soul, and let nothing therein resist thy will. Let those who believe not in thee, condemn and refuse to obey thee; for my part, O my God! I acknowledge thee, receive thee, cast myself at thy feet, and submit myself entirely to thee; because I know thou art my true king. Accept the homage I pay thee; grant that I may be faithful to thee, may not betray thee, and may never abandon thy service.

VIII. They still accuse thee of having forbidden to *pay tribute to Caesar*. What a falsehood is this! who was ever more exempt than thou, O my God! from this obligation? And yet thou hast always submitted thereto. Thou wast pleased to be carried

carried to *Bethlehem*, even before thou wast born, in obedience to *Cæsar's* command, and to pay him at thy coming into the world, the tribute he required of his subjects. Thou didst command *Peter* to pay the tribute for thee and himself; and thou publicly taughtest that we must *render to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar*. Thus thou art loaded with false accusations, O my Jesus! and answerest nothing. They return thee evil for the good thou hast done, falsehood for the truth thou hast taught, and iniquity for the justice which thou hast maintained; and thou didst not so much as say one single word in thy own defence! Permit me therefore, O Lord! to speak for thee.

How couldst thou detain the goods of another, thou who art the author and dispenser of all goods? What need hast thou of the tributes that are paid to the kings of the earth? Thou from whom they themselves hold all they possess, and who hast despised their grandeur for my sake. It is true that thou exactest a tribute of me; but it is the tribute of my love; and *that* thou forbiddest me under severe penalties to pay to any other besides thyself. If that be thy crime, O my Lord and my King! the *Jews* cannot be accused of falsehood; but that tribute is entirely due to thee, O thou God of my heart! since thou hast acquired it with the price of thy blood. It is not enough to give thee the fruits thereof, I offer thee my whole heart; permit no creature, O Lord! ever to share it with thee.

IX. In fine, these sacrilegious people say, that thou art a seditious person and a disturber of the public peace; thou, O sweet Jesus! who art the *Lamb of God*, and the *Prince of peace*; thou who reconcilest us to thy Father, teachest us so holy a doctrine, purifiest our faith, retrenchest the false interpretations which the corruption of men had added to the law of God, bringest us a law full of sweetness, and unitest all our hearts in the unity of thy love. Those who hear and follow thee, enjoy a solid peace; and those who abandon thee, fall into trouble.

What tumult didst thou then excite amongst the people, O my God! Thou hast borne with the sins of the whole world, received sinners, and healed the sick; thou hast enlightened the blind, taught the way to heaven; and thou wast called a disturber of the public peace! Be thou blessed, O my Lord and my God! for the profound silence thou keepest under so evident a calumny, against the sanctity of thy works, and innocency of thy life, by suffering thyself to be thus condemned, as if thou hadst been guilty. I adore that heroic patience, and that extreme love which made thee

thou suffer every thing without defending thyself. When wilt thou kindle in my heart that heavenly fire which thou hast brought upon earth?

O most sacred Mother of God! you who share with your well-beloved Son the affronts which he suffers, who pass for the mother of an impostor, and a seditious person, and who so sensibly feel the false testimonies wherewith they blacken his innocence, obtain me an ardent and sincere desire of resembling him; and that all my joy may be to suffer for him, and all my glory to live with him in abjection and contempt. Ye angels of God, who behold this truth; ye saints of heaven, who have followed him, bless the Lord for me, and obtain me the grace of comprehending and loving him, and never to seek any other glory than that of resembling this divine Saviour, the only model of the predestinate. *Amen.*

XXXI. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

He is abandoned in the night-time to the insolence of the soldiers.

THE crimes which the *Pharisees* and chiefs of the *Jews* accused our Saviour of, were so manifestly false, and his innocence was so well known, that they justly feared they could not obtain his condemnation, either from the people, or from *Pilate*; and that they should be looked upon afterwards as wicked persons and calumniators. For whereas truth and virtue fear nothing, because they carry their own defence along with them; malice on the contrary is afraid of itself, especially when, to hide its poison, it covers itself under the appearances of zeal. It is as apprehensive of the light, as innocence is desirous of it. It is always diffident, and never thinks itself secure, even under the cloak of virtue. Thus it is never at rest. As it apprehends every thing, it seeks new artifices every moment for its defence; it heaps crime upon crime; till it comes at last to a horrible excess thereof: and nothing is more true than these words of the wise man: *a troubled conscience doth always forecast grievous things*, (Wisd. xvii. 10.)

Therefore the *Pharisees* and chief-priests applied themselves so diligently to destroy the reputation of Christ, and to establish their own; that they every where defamed his person, life, doctrine, and miracles; and resolved at last by a diabolical malice, to render him contemptible to the people. They knew how inconstant the populace

populace were in their judgments; that they never penetrate the bottom of things; and that they always allow themselves to be carried away by noise, following the multitude, and dazzled by appearances.

II. They therefore no longer observed any measures with our Saviour. When they saw themselves masters of his person, they affronted him openly, and ill treated him in so unheard of a manner, that the vulgar were shaken in their first sentiments concerning him. They began to think that if that man were as holy as he was said to be, the priests who were the depositaries of the law of God, and the *Pharisees*, who made profession of sanctity, would not treat him so unworthily: That they had some private reasons for using him so, and had perhaps found some considerable crime in his conduct, which it was not proper to publish.

Indeed that artifice succeeded with them; for the next day, that very people, who, had followed Christ, were charmed with his doctrine, astonished at his miracles, and had received him as the *Messias*, abandoned him so far as to join against him with his cruellest enemies.

III. Then it was that their hatred, which they had so long dissembled, began to break out. They affronted him in a thousand manners, both with their own hands, and those of the soldiers who guarded him. They rudely struck him, and buffeted him, whereby his sacred face became quite swelled up and livid; they pulled off his beard and hair; and although all was done in the dark, every one might behold next day what he had suffered during so cruel a night. This artifice succeeding, prompted them also to observe no longer any form of justice, and to corrupt *Pilate's* judgment; who not knowing any other of Christ than what he heard from his malicious accusers, had even upon their accusations judged him innocent, yet was prevailed upon by them, so far as to pass an unjust sentence against him, not having the courage to resist the rage of the people, and the cabal of the magistrates.

IV. Our Saviour had already received a blow on the face in *Anna's* house; but after he had been judged guilty of blasphemy at the house of *Caiphas*, all strove which should ill-treat him most. They tied his hands behind his back, put a cord about his neck, and held him fast, that he might not turn away his face when they struck him. That precaution was needless: for, after having told us, that *to him who strikes us on the cheek, we ought to offer also the other*, (Luke vi. 29.) he was resolved to confirm by his own example, the doctrine he had taught us; and if he did it not,

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when he received a blow in the house of *Annas*, it was because he had a regard to our weakness, and would comfort us in the extreme repugnance we feel in suffering affronts.

He taught us therefore by that conduct, that though we feel in ourselves a very sensible pain, when we are ill-treated; yet we ought to avoid impatience and wrath, which always scandalises our neighbour; and to testify by our words and by our whole exterior behaviour, a christian moderation. For that *patience* pleases God nevertheless, though it be not yet perfect; and if we are faithful in practising it on all occasions, our sorrow will soon be turned into joy, and our confusion into glory; and we shall at last esteem ourselves too happy, in *being reputed to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus* (Acts v. 41.)

V. That inhuman treatment was accompanied with so many confused outcries, such injurious words, and despising actions, that to comprehend the indignity thereof, we need only consider what the hatred of the *Jews* was against our Saviour; or rather that of the *devil*, who excited them to affront him at a time, when there was no person whose authority could stop or quell their insolence and cruelty. *There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness*, says the prophet *Isaiah*, (liii. 2.) *and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him: despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and knowing infirmity; and his look as it were hid and despised, whereupon neither have we esteemed him.* For that reason the prophet had said a little before, that what he was going to say would not be believed; and that the hand of God, laid heavy upon his son, was incomprehensible.

VI. The countenance of Christ was so beautiful, so grave, and so modest, that it drew veneration from all those that beheld it; and whatever hatred the *Jews* might bear him, they were always restrained by a certain sentiment of respect, when they saw him. They knew also by their own experience, that he penetrated the bottom of hearts, and knew the most secret thoughts, since he had sometimes discovered the same to themselves. Hence it was that in order to satisfy their hatred with more freedom, they blindfolded him; and after having rudely struck him, and given him some blows, they said to him, by way of mockery, *prophecy to us, O Christ, who is he that struck thee.* What malice! what affront! and what indignity! (*Matt. xxvi. 68.*)

He that shall compare the majesty of this *Man-God*, with the baseness of those that treat him so, shall be capable only of admiration and silence, especially if he considers the patience with which
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this king of glory suffers such great ignominies, and the compassion he has even for those who make him suffer them.

VII. But what ought to redouble our astonishment is, that the opinion of such numbers of men still to this day, places the height of dishonour and infamy in those things which Christ suffers; I do not say only among the *Infidels*, who not knowing this divine Mediator, consider not those reproaches as the true remedy of their evils; but even among *Christians* who are persuaded that his confusion is the source of their glory. A blow is so atrocious an injury to them, that they do not think they can wash off the stain but in his blood, from whom they received it, and expose themselves to lose their own soul, in order to deprive their enemy of life; and yet the faith which they profess, and the experience of the saints teach them, that it is an advantage for a christian to suffer what Christ has suffered, that the hope of celestial blessings is established by injuries and contempt, and that charity is inflamed and purified thereby at the sight of our Saviour suffering and dying.

But alas! their own pride, and the vanity of worldly opinions blinds them in such a manner, that they are not touched with the examples of Christ, nor with the purity of his doctrine. They bring for an excuse their ignorance, weakness, and unforeseen occasions; but as they acknowledge that the error they are in upon this point, is manifestly contrary to the *evangelical truth*, to the law of God, and to the example of our Saviour, which are an infallible rule to us; they endeavour in vain to excuse themselves on account of their ignorance. Neither do weakness and passion justify them; since reason ought not to give way thereto; nor even *occasions*, how unforeseen soever they may be, because they impose no necessity on the human will. And therefore this blindness can proceed from nothing but the malice of the devil, from the corruption of our own wills, and from the falshood of our judgments, whereby Christ is much more offended than by all the affronts he endured in his Passion.

VIII. He declares this expressly, when he says: (*Luke ix. 26.*) *He that shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, the Son of man shall be ashamed of him, when he shall come in his majesty, and in that of his Father, and of the holy angels.* And certainly it is just that our Lord should not receive with him into heaven, those that were ashamed to do on earth what he himself had done; that preferred the false honours of this world to the imitation of the heavenly king; and shut their ears against the truth of his doctrine, in order to follow the vanity of human opinions.

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When we are dispensed with by our state in the cruel obligation which this world imposes on us, of washing off our dishonour in the blood of our brethren, we have a great many thanks to give to God for that dispensation. That man is happy who has embraced a kind of life, wherein he has no other glory to maintain than that of Christ; and who would scandalise even the most worldly men, if, refusing to imitate him, he were impatient and revengeful in injuries? But persons engaged in the world ought also to remember, that our Saviour will never dispense with them in the observation of his law, that he will not receive their excuses, and if he was meek and patient, so far as to suffer for our sakes all manner of affronts, he will not be less severe in condemning those, who allowing themselves to follow those corrupt maxims, of which we have spoken, will not imitate his meekness and patience.

The best counsel that can be given to persons, who, in the injuries they receive, feel an extreme repugnance to the practice of christian meekness, is first to take a firm resolution in the presence of God, not to do any thing at that time according to the judgment of the world; to prostrate themselves afterwards at the feet of Christ, and earnestly to beg of him *that grace*, by all the affronts he suffered; that those very reproaches which opened us the gates of heaven, may also open our hearts to the divine light, dispel in us the darkness of those false opinions, and give us strength to resist the torrent of worldly maxims. Then Christ, who endured all those ignominies only for establishing in our hearts the love of those divine truths which he has taught us, will accept our desires, and operate in us those miracles of patience, which he is accustomed to operate in his saints.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ abandoned to the insolence of the soldiers.

PERMIT me, O my Jesus! to consider the beauty of thy countenance, before it be disfigured by the cruel hands of those impious persons. I adore thee, O heavenly beauty! which the angels always behold, and which they always desire to behold; who art the joy of heaven, the glory of those that love thee, and the delight of those that seek thee. Is it possible that those profligates shall dare to lay their prophane hands upon that sacred face? Hast thou not already suffered affronts enough, O Lord! without still

still adding this thereto? Permit them not, O thou love of my soul! to deface that divine beauty, lest those souls that are touched therewith, and live only by the pleasure they find therein, should not be able to discover it any more.

O inhuman executioners! O hearts harder than rocks! If ye knew who he is whom ye have in your hands; if ye beheld the beauty which ye affront, ye would soon change your contempt into respect, and your cruelty into love. I behold thy enemies satisfying their cruel hatred upon thy divine countenance, and I am still alive; and can my eyes also behold the other torments which they are preparing for thee?

II. Is it not sufficient for thy love that they should stretch thee on a cross, dislocate thy arms, pierce thy hands and feet, and that no part of thy body should be free from suffering? Why dost thou not at least spare thy countenance? Why wilt thou suffer it to be bruised and disfigured, at the beginning of thy Passion? Is it possible there should be any men that are not touched with the modesty and majesty which shines therein? But they are touched therewith, O Lord! and if they cover it, it is to prevent the sentiment of veneration with which it inspires them, and to strike thee afterwards with less moderation. O how true it is that thou art meek and humble of heart! without *that* couldst thou expose thyself, as thou dost, to such cruel ignominies?

Here it is, O light of my soul! that I clearly see how far I am from thy humility. Sometimes I say in general, when my heart is touched with thy reproaches, that there is none but what I am resolved to bear for thy sake; but when I come to sound my interior and would speak sincerely, I acknowledge my weakness before thee, O my God! If I saw myself upon the point of receiving in public, and against all manner of justice, any blows from those that are below me, I should be extremely disturbed, or should do myself a horrible violence, or I could never resolve to bear them.* Whence comes this, O Lord? It is because I am only humble in words, and at the bottom am quite full of pride.

But thou, O divine lamb! because thou art meek and humble of heart, and thy humility being true, sincere, and interior, thou sufferest in silence; thou lovest those that abuse thee, and yieldest up that sacred face to all the confusion wherewith they cover it, in order to deliver me from the eternal confusion which I have deserved. And yet I, always proud in spirit and heart, after such an example, have not the courage, nor even the desire of presenting the other

cheeks

cheek to him that would give me a blow. When wilt thou destroy my pride, O my God! when shall I be like thee, truly meek, and humble of heart.

III. The laws of the world offer me reasons for killing him that shall give me a blow; and they would have me make a greater account of a chimerical honour, than of my neighbour's life. There are none but slaves, the world tells me, that do not revenge themselves for the blows they receive from their masters. How contrary are thy maxims to those of the world, O my God! though I continually affront thee, thou always esteamest my life and salvation more than thy own glory. Thou sufferest them, without complaint, to bruise thy face; art thou then my slave, O my sovereign Lord! will it not be said, that thy love is blind? For who art thou; and who am I? O mystery! O prodigy! O depth of the wisdom and charity of God! O love which workest so many wonders in the heart of Jesus, why dost thou not change mine? Is it possible that thou shouldst find, in a worm of the earth, more resistance to humiliations, than thou findest in the divine Majesty?

IV. I am ashamed of myself, O Lord! when I consider that those who treat thee so unworthily, are not savage beasts, but men of the same nature with myself; that I am a child of *Adam*, like them, inclined to the same disorders as they are; capable as well as they of hating that divine beauty, of bruising that adorable face, and of veiling it, in order to affront it with greater liberty.

I have not only, O my Saviour! deserved by my crimes all the evils I see thee suffer; I am not only the cause of thy suffering them, but also they are my equals, that make thee suffer them; it is my flesh that abuses thee, and yet I hate it not, nor have any abhorrence of myself: on the contrary, I still flatter this criminal flesh, and love myself more than thee, or thy law.

When wilt thou work in me, O Lord! that change which thou desirest? When wilt thou give me a true hatred of myself? When shall I abhor a nature, which abandoned to itself, and deprived of thy grace, can commit such great wickedness? O sweet Jesus! O humble Jesus! accomplish the work in me for which thou endurest such prodigious humiliations with so much sweetness. For if thou withdrawest thy hand, I shall become worse than those who abuse thee.

V. The hatred they bear thee, O my Saviour! is so great, that they will not admit of any thing that can mitigate the fury where-with they are animated. They cover the beauty of thy face, lest they

they should be moved to compassion thereby. Ah! hide it not from me, O Lord! Shew me, O thou love of my soul! that divine countenance, quite livid and bruised as it is. I desire it, adore it, and love it in that state; and it is so much the dearer to me, as it is the more disfigured for my sake.

I perceive, through all that covers it from me, the attractives wherewith my soul is charmed.

Pardon me, O Lord! all the sins I have committed against thee. For, alas! how many times have I veiled thy face, that I might sin with more freedom? How many times have I wished thou mightst not see me, that I might follow, without any restraint, my disorderly appetites? Illuminate me, O divine light! and make me discover, in the cruelty of thy executioners, the disorders of my life.

VI. When I read thy holy Scriptures, when I hear thy word; when I consider what thou hast done for me; or else, when thou preventest me interiorly with the blessings of thy sweetness, and I discover what thou art, what I owe thee, and what thou requirest of me; dost thou not then discover the beauty of thy countenance to me, that I may observe thy law, and allow myself to be gained by thy love? And when I am unwilling to hear thy voice; when I reject thy doctrine, and forget thy mercies, to follow the corruption of my own desires, do not I throw a veil over thy face, whose splendor would be capable of dispelling all my darkness?

O divine mercy! couldst thou bear with me, if thou wert not infinite? Forget, O Lord! my past miseries; and grant for the future, I may never lose the sight of thee; that I may always walk in thy presence; that I may apply myself as diligently to seek thee, as I have done to fly from thee; and that my blindness may at this moment be at an end. Let not the sins I have hitherto committed hinder thee, O my Saviour! from shewing me thy face, and softening the obduracy of my heart. Thou canst this moment convert me, and transform me into thee; do thou what thou canst, O my God, my love, and my sovereign good!

VII. Be thou content, O my Jesus! with what thou hast already suffered. Make thy executioners cease, and discover to me that adorable countenance, that I may be moved to compassion by seeing it; and that my soul in the excess of its grief, may melt with love for thee. The Jews were afraid to see *Moses's* face, when he came down from the mount, because they could not bear the splendor of it.

it, which proceeded from the conversation he had with our Lord; and desired, that *Moses* might speak to them and not God. But souls that love thee, O my Saviour! being charmed with thy immense charity, desire nothing so much as to hear thy voice, and to behold thee openly. They hate every thing that hinders so sweet a commerce; they cannot suffer any medium between thee and them, nor any veil that might hide thy beauty.

Moses, who knew thee, and burnt with love for thee, sighed continually after that happiness, and earnestly besought thee, that since thou hadst honoured him with thy friendship, thou wouldst also shew him thy countenance. Grant the same favour to me, thy unworthy servant; I beg this of thee only, that I may know thee better, love thee more ardently, and see myself happily absorbed in thee. Take away my heart, O my God! charm all the powers of my soul. Since thou art to do it one day, why dost thou it not at present? It is true, if I were wholly thine, nothing would hide the splendor of thy beauty from me. I should behold thee, know thee, and love thee in all creatures. But who can work that wonder but thyself, O thou salvation of my soul!

VIII. Remember, O Lord! that thy eyes, over which they cast a veil, were not shut in regard to St. *Peter*, who had denied thee at that time; that thou didst look upon him, and that one single look of thine pierced his heart, and infused a light therein, which made him know and weep for his sin. Thou art the same as thou wast then, O thou God of my soul! Look upon me with the same eyes; penetrate my heart with the rays which flow from thy countenance; that, discovering the miserable state I am in, I may deplore all my life, as the apostle did, the misfortune of having offended thee. Receive me into the number of thy servants, O charitable master! I offer and resign myself to thee; do with me whatever thou plearest; I only beg of thee thy love, and the grace of being charmed with thy divine beauty, O my Jesus, my Saviour, and my sovereign felicity!

O most sacred mother of God! you who were equally sensible of the charms of the most beautiful of the children of men, and of the affronts which he suffered, be mindful of a miserable sinner, and obtain me the grace to love every thing, for the sake of this divine Saviour, that he has loved for me. Angels of heaven, blessed spirits! ye who continually behold the brightness of his divine beauty; love him, praise him, and bless him with all your strength. Be inflamed for yourselves and me with that fire which he kindles in you; supply my tepidity, and beg for me, that I may

never forget his mecies; that nothing may make me lose the remembrance of his reproaches: and that I may hate every thing that can separate me from him. *Amen.*

XXXII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

They spit in his face.

WHEN Christ had suffered all the blows, buffets, and other vile treatments, which rage inspired his executioners with, they uncovered his face; but it was only to cover it with spittle. This ignominy, which is the basest effort of contempt and hatred, appeared so great to our Saviour, that he had clearly foretold it, by the mouth of his prophet, saying: *I have not turned away my face from the rebukers and spitters upon me*, (Isa. 1. 6.) He himself put so *unheard of an affront* into the number of the chief sufferings of his passion, when he declared to his apostles that the Son of man should be delivered to the Gentiles, and should be *mocked and scourged, and spit upon*, (Luke xviii. 32.) The other pains which he endured are common among men, but *this* is extraordinary: and though it neither wounds, nor kills, it is notwithstanding very sensible; because it is extremely injurious, and shews in him that does it, a great deal of impudence and brutality, and an excessive contempt of him that suffers it.

It is an incivility among us to spit before a person with whom we speak; we commonly turn aside out of respect; and there are some people, otherwise rude and barbarous, who would think themselves affronted, if one would spit in their chambers. But the *Jews*, far from having that regard to the divine person of our Saviour, would testify to him by that injury, that they judged no place more proper for receiving the filth which came from their mouths, than that sacred face, which is the object of the eternal veneration and contemplation of the blessed.

They added also to that contempt a thousand injurious words, calling him *curst impostor, blasphemous, disturber of the public peace, an enemy of God's law, hypocrite, magician, Samaritan, possessed with the devil, minister of Beelzebub*, and gave him many other such names, to justify thereby the indignity wherewith they treated him.

II. Behold

II. Behold what their occupation was, during a great part of the night. They retired only when they were weary of tormenting our Saviour, who was not wearied with suffering for them; because he knew the need they had of his sufferings. Therefore he turned not away his face to shun their strokes; he neither complained, nor reproached them; and he endured all these affronts with as much meekness and goodness, and with as serene a countenance, as if he had been receiving sinners to penance; which was the only thing in the world that could give him the greatest joy.

III. There is reason here for being astonished, that the Son of God should have been pleased to suffer things which appear to human eyes so unworthy of his majesty; but our astonishment will cease, if we elevate our thoughts to the eternal designs of God, and consider with attention and respect the reasons of that conduct.

The first is, that God being most perfect in his divine nature, it was fit he should be also, as much as possible, in the human nature. It was requisite that the works of his humility should correspond in some manner to those of his power; and that the profoundness of his humiliations should equal, as much as possible, the greatness of his majesty. Thence it is that he ought to make us sensible of his divinity even in his infirmity; to elevate our faith, our hope, and our charity; and to dissipate our errors, and enlighten our blindness.

For that reason also it is, that he invites all those that are burthened and labour, to come to him, that he may comfort them, by discovering to them the fountain of all good; and he particularly exhorts them to imitate his meekness and humility, because there are infinite treasures hidden in the practice of these two virtues. But that none might be excused from thence, he has been pleased to walk before us, humbling himself even to excess, and so far as to be able to say with the prophet: (*Psal. xxi. 7.*) *I am a worm, and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.* *Reproach* and *outcast* are terms which denote the lowest degree of humiliation: for *reproach* is that which with reason makes a man blush, though he be the most insensible of shame; and *outcast* is what deserves to be despised, forgotten, thrown down, and trampled under foot by the vilest populace.

Behold the state whereto the Son of God is reduced. He is not even content with being trod under foot by the last of men, and by the slaves of the devil, as a worm of the earth; but he was pleased also that they should spit in his face, and cover it with

a veil; as an object of horror, and unworthy of being looked upon.

IV. The second reason of so prodigious a humiliation is, that our Saviour was pleased to satisfy, in the most perfect manner, the divine majesty, offended by the sins of men. And the third reason is, that he was pleased to teach us how we ought to humble ourselves before God, in order to appease his wrath, and draw down his mercy. For though Christ had no reason for humiliation in himself, he was pleased to shew sinful man to what degree he ought to humble himself.

It is certain that the Son of God would have deserved all the torments and reproaches which he was made to endure, if he had been truly guilty of the crimes whereof he was accused; since, wholly innocent as he was, having voluntarily taken our iniquities upon himself, he bare the punishment thereof, as if he had really committed them. For that reason it was that he suffered chains, stripes, nails, the cross, and death itself.

But in order also to make every sinner comprehend what he ought to think of his sins, and the judgment God passes thereon, Christ suffered them to spit in his face; and has taught us thereby, that he who does not abhor his crimes, and is not confounded therewith in the sight of God, deserves the horror, contempt, and execration of all creatures.

V. It is easy to judge, from all that has been said, with what spirit so many holy personages were animated, who have earnestly fought reproaches, and received them joyfully. There have even been many such who were unwilling to shun, when they might, a cruel and shameful death, wherewith they were threatened, because being enlightened by God, they knew themselves perfectly well; saw what was due to a nature always inclined to evil, and capable of the greatest disorders. In this view they offered themselves to every thing that could humble them. They esteemed themselves unworthy for the earth to support them, the sun to enlighten them, and for any creature to bear with them; and when they came to consider that Christ had been abused by their sins, there was no humiliation but what appeared to them infinitely below what they deserved.

Such were the sentiments of those truly christian men, whom our Saviour had filled with his spirit. Though they were far less sinners than we, yet they were much greater penitents.

What

What then ought those to think of themselves, who are given up to all manner of crimes, and refuse nothing to their irregular appetites? Let them at least sometimes make this reflection, that the same Lord who has done and suffered so much for them, and has reduced himself, for the love of them, to so prodigious an excess of contempt and abjection, will one day despise them in his wrath, and condemn them to an eternal reproach, with so much the more rigour, as he has expressed the more tenderness for them. They will then clearly see, but too late, how much he detests sin, to which they were so much addicted; since, in order to punish it, he condemns souls to eternal punishments, whom he has loved so far as to sacrifice his honour and life for their salvation.

VI. In fine, our Lord was pleased to endure all those ignominies for the consolation of his servants, whom the world commonly treats with so much contempt. He has prepared for them, as one may say, in that Face covered with reproaches, a secure asylum, whither they may retire, when, as worms on the earth, they shall be trod under foot by worldlings. It is those good people whom David speaks of, when he says: *Psal. xxx. 21. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy countenance, from the disturbers of men. Thou shalt protect them in thy tabernacle, from the contradiction of tongues.* Since there is nothing more open in man than his countenance, how comes the prophet to affirm, that our Lord will hide his own in the secret of his Countenance? It is because faithful and enlightened souls discover under that bruised and affronted Face, a most Divine Beauty; and when they have once known it, they retire thither, adhere to it, and repose therein; and no longer fear the persecutions of the world.

VII. For Christ, wholly disfigured as he is, is not so hidden, but that he makes faithful souls, even through his reproaches, sensible of the charms of his beauty. St. Peter, after having protested with a rash confidence, that he would sooner die than renounce his master, being interrogated in Annas's house, whether he was Christ's disciple? answered that he knew him not. He also gave the same answer twice at Caiaphas's house, at the very time when our Saviour was suffering all the affronts of which we have spoken.

Then that apostle illuminated with a Divine Light, and prevented with a Grace, without which he should have persevered in his sin until death, began to enter again into himself, was penetrated with sorrow and confusion, quitted the occasion which had made him fall into it, wept bitterly, and humbly begged pardon; and his penance was the first fruit of the ignominies which our Saviour

Saviour endured: to teach us all, in the person of him who was to be the visible Head of his Church, that if we do not resist the light which proceeds from the eyes of Jesus suffering and dying, we shall soon be sensible that all our happiness proceeds from his sufferings and reproaches; and that he has left a treasure of Grace and Peace in abjection, which the world does not find therein, and which is only reserved for those who are meek and humble of heart.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ despised and affronted.

O MY Saviour! who knowest my evils, and who alone art capable of healing them; infinite thanks be given to thee, for having applied so efficacious a remedy to them. I look upon my sins as small evils; because I never well comprehended either the injury they do me, the Majesty they offend, or the remedy which they stand in need of. Thou seest, O eternal Wisdom! the greatness of my evil; and therefore thou offerest me violent remedies, and wilt have me make use of *sorrow, humiliation, and contempt of myself*, to tear from my heart that self-love, which is deeply rooted therein, and the esteem of those things which separate me from thee. But because thou hast taken upon thyself the expiation of my sins, thou hast suffered them to work in thee what they ought to do in me.

I have disfigured thy image in myself, O thou Life of my soul! I have defiled myself with a thousand crimes; and in order to wash me from them, something was requisite that was still viler, and more shameful than every thing I had loved contrary to thy law. But thou, O my God! who art the sovereign Purity, what need hast thou of being purified, that thou shouldst suffer such horrible humiliations? Why wouldst thou have that adorable Face to be covered with spittle, as if it were the thing in the world the most worthy of contempt; and why wouldst thou be treated as the last of all men?

II. O my only Good! O my Eternal Happiness! Is there any thing odious in thy Person? Is there any thing to be found in thy Conversation, that can give disgust? Can men hate what is good, and abhor what is amiable? It is to me, O my God! that such treatment

treatment is due. Thy enemies can put no affront upon me that I have not deserved; since I have forsaken, like the prodigal child, the abundance and delights of thy house, to run after the food of swine; have preferred vain amusements to thy Conversation, and mean and perishing pleasures to thy Friendship, Embraces, and all the Blessings thou givest me, and which thou promisest me. It is I, O Lord! who deserve that all men should spit in my face, and that all creatures should treat me as an abominable sinner, and unworthy of being regarded. And nevertheless, O merciful Father! thou presentest thy sacred Face, to receive the affronts which are due to me; and abasest thy Majesty to the humiliations which I have deserved.

Let me suffer those ignominies, O thou God of my soul! or if Thou art resolved to suffer them for me, give me strength at least to do interiorly what Thou endurest exteriorly; and to have as much contempt and horror of every thing that can separate me from thee, as thy executioners express for thee. Inspire me with a general disgust of the world and its pleasures; teach me to hate myself, as much as I deserve to be hated, after having so basely abandoned thee, O Source of eternal goods!

III. I make this prayer to thee, O my God! because I feel the weight of my corruption, and because my heart, earthly of its own nature, and yet more earthly by the sins it has committed, loves only those things which resemble it. But since Thou hast created it for other goods, make it love them; and produce in it the fruit of thy ignominies. It is to exalt me, O Lord! that thou hast humbled thyself; it is to make me comprehend how worthy we are of contempt, when we depart from thee, that Thou hast been pleased to be despised, so far as to suffer the highest indignities. Is it possible that I should see thy Humiliations, and not desire that all the world should know me for what I am, and treat me as thou wast treated for me, O my Lord and my God!

But alas! I do quite the contrary of what thou teachest me. I still esteem myself, in spite of all the reasons I have for despising myself; and I am unwilling to be for thee, in the state wherein thou art for me. O misery, O meanness, O baseness of my soul! when wilt thou take me out of this mire, O Lord! when shall I depart from myself, to see myself such as I am, and to hate myself as I ought? *Send forth thy light and thy truth*, Psal. xlii. 3. that they may make me enter into the knowledge of thy Perfections: for I shall not depart from myself, but so far as I shall approach to thee.

As for thee, O Lord! who knowest me perfectly, what couldst Thou do more, than to shew me in thy abused Person, and upon thy disfigured Face, the true state of my interior, and the manner in which I ought to treat myself? But wretched that I am, I feel not my evil, nor can I deliver myself from myself. Have mercy on me, O Lord! have mercy on me.

IV. Thou hadst good reason to say, by the mouth of thy prophet, O my God! *Psal. xxi. 7, I am a worm, and no man.* For thou hast not only reduced thyself to the state of a worm of the earth, which every one tramples upon, which is equally despised by great and small, good and bad, men and beasts; but thou hast also been pleased that thy sacred Face should be covered with filth and ignominy. O King of glory! O only Son of the Eternal Father! couldst thou compare thyself to any thing more contemptible than a worm of the earth? Yes, O Lord! thou needst but to compare thyself to me, thou shouldst have found nothing so mean, nor so worthy of contempt in all nature; for I am but a dunghill, and a heap of Corruption within and without.

V. *What shall I render thee, O Lord! for all things thou hast rendered to me? Psal. cxv. 3.* Methinks I have nothing to give thee; and yet I know very well what thou requirest of me. It is myself thou wouldst have, O Lord! Why dost thou not then this moment take possession of my soul? But perhaps thou dost not take me, O my God! because thou hast created me free, and wilt not do me violence. O unhappy freedom! which I make use of only for destroying myself! Thou waitest till I give myself to thee: behold me here, O thou God of my heart! behold me here, O my Life! behold me here, O my Jesus! send me all the affronts which thou shalt judge profitable for my salvation. Govern me according to thy will, since I abuse my own in offending thee.

I offer myself to thee with all my heart; I resign myself entirely to thy Providence, do with me what thou pleasest, burn, cut, comfort, afflict, humble, or exalt me according to thy good pleasure. The only favour I beg of thee is, that I may never withdraw myself from thy Conduct. *Confirm this, O God! which thou hast wrought in me. Psal. lxxvii. 29.* Accomplish by thy mercy, the will which thou inspirest me with, that being persuaded nothing shall happen to me, but by the sweet disposition of thy Providence, and that my happiness in this life consists in having no other will but thine, I may never will any thing but what thou willest.

VI. Teach me, O Lord! one thing which I desire to know of thee; instruct my ignorance, since thou art my master, and wilt not

not have me to hear any but thee. As worms are formed and nourished with dirt, hast thou not annihilated thyself so far as to become in some manner the dirt and filth of the world, that a worm of the earth, such as I am, might find in thee its food and life! Even as thou wast born in a manger betwixt two beasts, to teach men, who were like beasts by the baseness of their desires, that they might approach unto, and be fed with thee; thou hast also been pleased perhaps that my soul, being accustomed to the mean things of the earth, might procure from thy humiliations a food which was suitable to it. Yes, O Lord! Thou wilt have it so; Thou hast not humbled thyself thus, but for fear the opposition of thy greatness and my meanness, should separate me from thee. Thy design was, that I seeing thee despised by men, might love thy contempt, after having lost through my fault the relish of thy greatness. Thus it is, O my God! that thou always accommodate thyself to the necessities and weakness of my soul.

Thou art come to me, because I could not go to thee. Thou hast taken upon thee all my debts, because I was incapable of satisfying them of myself: and thou art become my food in a thousand different manners, that in some of them I might relish thee. How can I behold all those admirable inventions of thy Love, and not be charmed with thy humiliations? Pure souls find therein an ineffable sweetness, and a solid nourishment, which are not to be met with in things that are possessed out of thee.

That mysterious bread which gave the prophet *Elias* sufficient strength for walking forty days, and for arriving at the top of mount *Horeb*, where he saw the Lord, was a cake baked under the ashes, *3 Kings xix*. Thus it is, O my God! that thy beauty is hidden under reproaches, thy power under infirmity, and thy glory under ignominy; and that thy faithful servants find under those ashes their nourishment and strength. All the reproaches wherewith thou art covered, cannot entirely conceal thee; I discover thee therein, totally blind as I am; I adore thee therein as my Lord and my God, as my King, as the most beautiful and amiable of the children of men, and as the most delicious food of my soul.

When shall I be so happy as to be filled therewith, and to be no longer capable to feed myself with any other food? Thou art, O my Saviour! the tree of knowledge of good and evil, whose fruit opens the eyes, and communicates light. Thou art the tree of life, whose virtue repairs all our strength: there proceeds from that bark, however hard and dry it may appear, a balm infinitely precious. When wilt thou gain me, O my God! by the odour of so sweet a perfume? Earthly meats are converted into the substance
of

of him that eats them; but the soul that tastes thee, O heavenly bread! is wholly transformed into thee. Work this change by the power of thy grace; grant that the desire of thyself, may induce me to embrace thy contempts, to despise and hate myself, for the love of thee. May I acknowledge myself such as I am, and may all creatures treat me as I deserve,

But if thy goodness has ordained otherwise, and if thou hast resolved to spare my weakness; at least, O Lord! never permit me to esteem myself after having seen thee covered with reproaches. There it is, that *thou art verily a hidden God*; and there it is that all those find thee who seek thee there in the simplicity of their heart, O thou glory and love of my soul! *Isai. xlv. 15.*

O Queen of angels! O humble handmaid of our Lord! you who know by your own experience, the happiness of being humbled for his love: he chose you for his mother, when he was pleased to become a worm of the earth, and the reproach of men; because you were the most humble of all creatures. The great favours bestowed upon you did not puff up your heart, nor diminish any thing in you of the mean sentiments you had of yourself. You did not receive all those treasures of graces for yourself alone; be mindful of this miserable sinner. O mother of mercy! Assist me to get out of the abyss wherein my sins have plunged me. Obtain me the *light* I have need of for knowing Christ, the *grace* of loving his humiliations, and the *strength* of suffering those that befall me. Angels of heaven! ye who openly behold the majesty of that adorable countenance. Blessed souls! who after having loved the reproaches of our Saviour on earth, enjoy the fruits thereof in heaven; beg of him for me the grace of persevering until death, in the desires which he inspires me with, of imitating him.
Amen.

XXXIII, SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The Prison.

THE princes of the people, the priests, the doctors of the law, and the *Pharisees*, wearied with tormenting our Saviour, by false witnesses, insults, and a thousand other kinds of abuses, retired to their own houses, in order to meet again the next day, commanding the soldiers to keep a strict guard over him that night.
There

There is reason to believe that the hatred wherewith they were animated, did not permit them to take much rest that night; and being wholly possessed with the design of destroying Christ, they thought only on what they might do or say against him in the assembly. For, as malice never yields, nor submits itself to the known truth, so it is only satisfied when it sees all the evil which it has desired. A heart, determined to wickedness, and deprived of God's grace, is, according to the expression of the Scripture, obdurate, inflexible, and *hard as bell*, which torments perpetually, and never says, it is enough. *Cant. viii. 6.*

Those passionate judges had lost all sense of human compassion, such beginnings so favourable to their design, far from mitigating their hatred, did but augment in them the desire of seeing it entirely satiated. Thus the remaining part of the night seemed long to them, though it was then almost spent: for the cock had already crowed thrice; and *St. Peter*, penetrated with sorrow, had retired to weep for his sin, leaving his master in the hands of the soldiers.

II. But because that Christ had been accused of magic, on account of the wonderful works he had wrought before their eyes; they were not content with setting guards over him, and binding him closely; they also shut him up in a secure place, continually fearing lest he should escape from them. It was then the time of year, when the sun rises at six; and that hour was called by the *Jews*, the *first hour of the day*; because they began to reckon their hours from the sun's rising. Although the day was near approaching, yet that short part of the night which remained, would have seemed very long to every other prisoner: for, besides the Son of God not having in prison where to lay his head, he was extremely weakened by the bloody sweat he had had in the garden, by the length of the way they had made him walk, rudely dragging him in the streets of *Jerusalem*, by the chains wherewith they had loaded him, and by the cuffs, blows, and other bad treatments which he had received. The soldiers likewise, instigated by the devil, and excited by the reward which the priests had promised them, allowed not our Saviour one single moment of rest, but relieved one another in tormenting him.

III. When the masters were retired, their domesticks, who were then free from their service, ran at the novelty of the spectacle, being desirous to see that man who was so much spoken of, joined he themselves to those that ill-treated him, renewed the affronts had already suffered, and also invented new ones. At least, we know by the prophets, that there was none that had compassion on him; and, that instead of those comforting words, which are commonly

commonly said to those that suffer, he heard nothing but injuries and blasphemies.

There are even many holy personages, who look upon that cruel night, as one of the greatest torments of our Saviour's passion. They affirm, that if the Evangelists have not given a particular account of every thing he then suffered, it is because it was obvious to the consideration and love of the faithful, to conjecture a part thereof; and that we shall also discover in Christ, at the day of the general judgment, an infinite treasure of mercies, which are unknown to us in this life. For, from an immense ocean of divine love, nothing could flow but floods of sufferings. He himself compares them, by *David's* mouth, to a dreadful tempest, which swallowed him up without drowning him. *I am come, says he, into the depth of the sea; and a tempest has overwhelmed me.* Ps. lxxviii. 3.

IV. Among all these affronts, our Saviour *was silent*: He suffered them patiently, and prepared himself to suffer still greater; because his love became stronger from the hatred of his enemies. He loved men, and even his persecutors, with an infinite love; and whilst they omitted nothing for to destroy him, that love was nourished with the desire of suffering still more for them. As nothing discomposed the serenity of mind in him, so his body and senses suffered pain in its whole extent. And thus he accomplished with tranquillity and perfection at the same time, the work of the redemption of mankind, in the sight of God his father; joining to most fervent prayers, an entire resignation in every thing that was requisite to be suffered by him for sinners.

This is, perhaps, what has induced the servants of God, to consider those hours which precede the sun's rising, as the properest time for prayer, that they might then unite themselves to Jesus suffering and praying. For in the midst of his greatest pains, and in the silence of the night, he still shed, for the souls whom he redeemed, tears of love, which those that saw them flow knew not the true cause of. But because we have all a share in that superabundant redemption, so we all ought to have recourse to Christ, as to a good that belongs to us, in order to give thanks to God in the pains we suffer, in the love he inspires us with, and in the blessings wherewith he prevents us; and we find in Christ a heart so full of goodness, that though he himself found no one to comfort him in his sufferings, or that was touched with any sentiment of compassion; yet that which we now feel in meditating upon them, is no less agreeable to him, than if we had felt it at the very time when he suffered.

V. But that divine Saviour, by the interior occupation, and the fervent prayer with which he accompanied all his sufferings, teaches in an admirable manner, the children of *Adam*, whose life is full of miseries, where they ought to seek their only and true consolation; and that they cannot find it but in God alone, by the means of prayer.

There are two things which render the accidents of life insupportable. The first is, not to discern the hand of God, which always dispenses them with weight and measure, in the view of our advantage. The second is, not to have recourse immediately to him, who alone can deliver us from them, or give us grace to make good use of them. Almost our whole life is spent in shunning labour, and seeking ease; but as we are on earth in a place of banishment, we have therein so many enemies without us, and so much weakness within us, that we can neither avoid the evils which pursue us, nor find the repose we seek for.

Men who, for the most part, live in a forgetfulness of God, and have no interior communication with him, do not lift up their eyes to heaven in time of tribulation; they seek about themselves for the cause of the pains which they endure; sometimes they attribute them to chance, and their own misfortune; sometimes to men's malice; or else they apply remedies thereto, which are worse than the evil itself; or, in fine, they allow themselves to be overwhelmed with grief, and thus falling from one evil into another, they spend their life without joy, and at the same time, without merit.

VI. For the remedies, to which they have recourse, are almost ever equally unprofitable both for time and eternity; because they seek for them amongst the false pleasures of the world, where there is nothing solid, or that can serve for any purpose but to render death more bitter and dangerous to us; whereas those who treat interiorly with God, drawing pure waters from the fountains of our Saviour, and taking from the meditation of his life the rules of their conduct, are established upon a firm rock. They believe with a firm faith, that the evils which befall them on earth, are presents from the hand of God, whereby they may merit heaven.

Thus in all their afflictions, from what side soever they come, in spite of the resistance of nature, they acknowledge, adore, and kiss, with love and respect, that paternal hand which strikes them; and always carry their thoughts beyond the instruments which God makes use of for chastising his children; because they know that no man can hurt them, but as far as God permits him; that this permission

permission does not extend beyond the body, and that God has reserved to himself alone, the power of chastising the soul, which is to be for ever happy or miserable.

In this view of faith, the interior man offers himself to God; adheres to him with a pure love, and humble submission; abandons himself entirely to his providence; receives from his hand every affliction that befalls him; regards the cross as the way which leads to life, and severely retrenching every thing that retards him, or turns him out of it; he thinks on nothing but how to become like Jesus suffering, in whom alone he finds his true consolation. For there are properly none but those who disgusted with his life, sigh after the other, and who are only possessed with the desire of pleasing God, can enjoy upon earth that solid joy, which may be called the beginning of a happy eternity.

VII. As the Holy Scripture, the doctrine and examples of the Saints clearly prove this truth, I will content myself with saying here, in a few words, what experience teaches us thereon. Let two men be compared together, one of whom lives in a forgetfulness of God, and is employed only about himself; the other forgetting himself, passes his life in an amorous resignation of himself into the hands of God; and let us afterwards judge which of the two is the most equal, calm, and content, in the vicissitudes of this world: it cannot be doubted but it is the last; since he has found the way to true repose.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ imprisoned.

WHERE have they put thee, O thou God of my soul! Why art thou in the place of this sinner? How comes it that they load thee with chains, and leave me at liberty? What means that? Art thou not, O my Jesus! the Lord strong and powerful, in whom *David* gloried, that *Lord who looseth the fettered*? Art not thou he whom the *Jews* attempted to seize and to stone, without being able to do either the one or the other? Art thou then become weak, O divine strength! Is thy strength in thy hair, as *Sampson's* was? How could they imprison thee? Nothing but love, O my Saviour! was capable of seizing thee, of binding thee, and of confining thee. I adore that incomprehensible love, which cannot

cannot be satiated with sufferings, nor fully satisfied, till it has accomplished the work of my salvation.

Take at least, O Lord! some hours rest; breathe a moment after so painful a night. Men and beasts have the night-time to refresh themselves in, and thou spendest it all entirely in suffering. Let me take thy place, and receive the affronts which they are still preparing for thee. But since thou wilt not; and since I behold thee loaded with chains, and overwhelmed with fatigues, cast upon me at least, before thou art taken out of that prison, one of those looks which penetrated the heart of thy apostle. Mine sighs towards thee, from the bottom of its misery, and implores thy mercy. Regard my necessities, O Lord! and send me that spirit which may make me feel thy pains, and imitate thy virtues.

II. Is not the day sufficient for thee, O my God! for accomplishing the work of our redemption, without employing the night also therein? Thieves deprive themselves of rest in the night, in order to obtain what they desire; and thou, O Lord! art intent day and night on seeking an entrance into my heart. Lose not thy rest on that account. Behold this heart which thou desirest; snatch it from the creatures which possess it; carry it away with thee; establish thy abode in it; and take thy rest therein, after so many labours. Harken to the voice of its misery and desires. Be more attentive to the faith and love which thou inspirest me with, than to the blasphemies which those impious people vomit out against thee.

III. Forget, O Lord! the weight of thy chains, since they deliver me from the weight of my sins. Forget the obduracy of those hearts, which love thee not, and are not touched with thy torments; and cast thy eyes upon this: wholly defiled, and miserable as it is, thou hast enlightened it with the lights of faith; it would gladly be able to comfort thee, to share thy reproaches with thee, and to receive thee within itself. I own that this abode is unworthy of thee; but thou art expected there, O Lord! thou art desired there: repose therein, at least, during the time of thy captivity. Thou shalt be less ill-treated there, than thou art amongst those blind people: for in fine, such as I am, I acknowledge thee for my true, only, and sovereign good. Thou canst, in the short time thou hast yet to remain in that prison, fill me with thy love, and lead me afterwards with thee into the other places where thou art to suffer.

I cannot express all that my heart desires; but thou knowest it, O Lord! since it is thou who inspirest me therewith; accomplish it,
since

since thou canst. Produce in my soul the fruits of thy captivity, chains, and affronts, and of the love wherewith thou endurest them. And though I be the cause thereof, shew in me, how far thy mercy is above my sins.

IV. I neither doubt of the love thou hast for me, O thou salvation of my soul! nor of the goodness with which thou art willing to pardon me, and to receive me into thy friendship. But I am diffident of myself and of the inclination which induces me to evil: I am always afraid lest it should separate me from thee, and render me unworthy of thy grace. But since thou hast left me penance as *a remedy* for my evils, and a *plank* in my ship-wreck, I conjure thee, O my Saviour! by the chains wherewith thou art loaded, to break mine, and to hear the sorrowful confession I make thee of my misery.

Pardon me, O Lord! the share I have in thy bonds and prison. I know I am the cause thereof, and that the captivity thou sufferest is the effect of my criminal liberty. Pardon me the too free thoughts to which I have let my mind give way. Pardon me the liberty of my tongue, which has made so many wounds in my soul. Pardon me the liberty of my senses, which has so often separated me from thee. Pardon me the lukewarmness wherewith I have loved thee, the negligence with which I have served thee, and the licentiousness of a heart always divided by a thousand affections contrary to thy law.

I condemn before thee, O my God! all the disorders of my life; and I confess, in the sight of heaven and earth, that I have abused, in offending thee, the free will which thou hadst given me, in order to serve thee. Have mercy on me, O Father of mercy! grant that those tormentors of thine may seize me, bind me, and imprison me, since thou seest I destroy myself when I am free. O that I were free only for doing good! May I be rather a captive for thee, and with thee, O my God! than free at a distance from thee.

V. But since the bad use I have made of my liberty, has occasioned thee such great pains, suffer me at least to bear a part of them. I return my liberty into thy hands; it is thine, since thou gavest it to me; and it is reasonable I should be deprived of it, since I have abused it so long. I restore it therefore to thee, O Lord! receive it through thy mercy; give it not to me again, even though I should beg it of thee; and confide no longer in a perfidious person, that has so often betrayed thee. But do thou, O my

Jesus

Jesus! who art the way, the truth and the life; speak by my tongue; see by my eyes; hear by my ears; and govern my interior and exterior senses; be the principle of all my motions, draw all my thoughts to thee; establish thy abode in my heart; attach me for ever to thy service. I cast myself at thy feet like *Magdalen*; I embrace them with all my heart; I amorously salute those chains with which thou art loaded; and I adore the affronts which thou endurest for my salvation.

O that thou wouldst chain me, and wouldst draw me after thee, by the bonds of thy charity! O that in the midst of the profound silence which thou observest, thou wouldst make me hear the sweetness of thy voice! O that thou wouldst say to my soul; *many sins are forgiven thee, because thou hast loved much*, (Luke vii. 47.) When will the moment come, wherein I shall hear those so comfortable words? Thou canst now pronounce them, O my Jesus! *Speak then, O Lord! for thy servant hears.* And though thou art silent in regard of those impious persons who surround thee, be not silent in regard of me; say to my heart this single word, *I am thy salvation.* I firmly believe thou art so, O my God! but my interior would gladly hear thee say it, because there is a charm in thy voice, capable of elevating all the powers of my soul.

It is true all thy actions are instructive, O my Saviour! thy reproaches are persuasive, and every thing speaks in thee, even thy silence. But I cannot be satisfied, unless thou thyself speakest to me. Remember, O Lord! that thou hast said, by one of thy prophets, that thou wilt draw us to thee, *in the cords of Adam, in the bands of charity*, (Osee xi. 4.) I see already the bands of *Adam*, thy sacred humanity, those blows, those affronts, and that prison. The sins of *Adam* and of his posterity, which thou hast vouchsafed to take upon thee, are truly the bands of *Adam*; but where are those chains of charity, wherewith I ought to be bound? Why am I still free? Why do I commit, with so much freedom, that evil I will? What hinders those chains from binding me? Draw me, O Lord! with those chains of love, bind me fast; and fix me to thee in such a manner, that I may never separate myself from thee: Grant that I may feel thy pains, imitate thy patience, and that thou mayst not suffer unprofitably for me. I beg this favour of thee, by the chains wherewith thou art loaded, and by the love with which thou bearest them.

VI. O that I were so happy as to see what passes in thee! O that I could know what the occupation of thy heart is, during so unworthy a treatment! Those barbarians think on nothing but tormenting

menting thee, and thou thinkest on nothing but suffering for them. Whilst their minds are studying new means of affronting thee, thine is labouring for their reconciliation; and it is in that profound contemplation that thou receivest strength, for accomplishing the remainder of thy sacrifice. How great a truth hast thou said, O my Lord and my God! when thou affirmedst, that *thou wilt refresh all those that come to thee*, (Matt. xi. 28.) I never repented of having come to thee; and I was never satisfied when I departed from thee; because there is nothing good without thee. When my mind is far from thee; the least pain overwhelms it; and when it is near thee, the greatest labours do not terrify it. How can I be strong without thee, O thou support and strength of my soul!

VII. I am not so weak, so sad, or so dejected in the evils which befall me, but because I seek the remedy without thee; or, because I only begin to have recourse to thee, when I find myself oppressed. With thee, O my God! the bitterest things become sweet, and the heaviest burthen weighs light; because thy presence dissipates our darkness, and enriches our poverty. Teach me to have recourse to thee in all my necessities, to resign myself to thee in all my uncertainties, and to suffer with thee all my pains. I shall always find thee ready to help me; for *to be shall not slumber nor sleep, that keepeth Israel*, (Ps. cxx. 4.) Grant then, O Lord! that in the troubles of this life my heart may repose in thee, and seek no other consolation but from thee, who art my true comforter; and who alone knowest my evils, as thou alone canst remedy them.

O most Holy Virgin! the refuge and protection of those who invoke you, represent my poverty to the Lord, who wrought such great things in you; and since the liberty of my heart is the source of all my evils, I beg by your means, obtain me those bonds of love, that I may remain fastened to Christ all my life. Blessed spirits, who, free from the miseries of this life, enjoy an infinite happiness, without fear of losing it; be mindful of these poor banished souls, and lift up our hearts by your intercession to the desires of those goods which ye possess, that we may one day possess them with you in a happy eternity. *Amen.*

XXXIV. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

He is ignominiously dragged through the streets of Jerusalem.

FRIDAY, the happiest day that ever enlightened the world, being come, men were in very different dispositions. Christ could not behold a more sorrowful day for Him, nor one more desired at the same time; since it was that whereon his love, restrained for so many years out of obedience, was at last to satisfy the consummation of its sacrifice.

He had ardently wished for that day all his life, and he saw it come with joy; because he was just upon the point of triumphing over hell, of uniting heaven and earth together, of submitting the hearts of his elect to his will, of redeeming sinners, and of opening to all men the treasures of his infinite mercy. But the world looked upon that day with indifferency, because it was ignorant of the immense goods which were prepared for it. And our Saviour's enemies, blinded by their own malice, abandoned of God, and become at the same time the ministers of the devil, and the executors of the eternal design which they knew not, imagined that they ought to lose no moment of a day so proper to satisfy their hatred, though it was to be to them a source of miseries, and a subject of immortal glory to Christ.

II. Thus, without its being necessary to send for them, they came to *Caiphas's* house at the dawning of the day. They agreed together about those points upon which they should condemn our Saviour. They resolved to insist thereon, whatever might be said in his favour, to oppress him by their clamours and number, if he undertook to defend himself, and to bring *Pilate* into their opinion, either by consent or by force. They were so afraid lest this affair should not succeed, that they imparted it to no one. They would lead him away by themselves, being persuaded, that since they were masters of the people, priests of the temple, doctors of the law, and having with them the *Pharisees*, who made profession of a holy life, nothing could be capable of resisting their authority.

But before *Pilate*, who being governor of the province, was engaged in other affairs, and the people who a few days before had received Christ with such great acclamations, could have time to excite any commotion for saving him, they ordered him to be ignominiously dragged through the streets of the city, that they might render him odious and contemptible to the people, who judge of things

things only by appearances, and pass so easily from love to hatred. They took him therefore out of the prison, saying a thousand injurious things to him, treating him as an *accursed*, a *seducer*, and *magician*. They called him no longer by his holy name, which they were unworthy to pronounce; and they were not touched with all the evils that he had suffered during the night.

Some asked him, out of a cruel raillery, whether he would not work some miracle? others blessed God, who had discovered such dangerous impostures. Then he was put into the hands of his executioners, led to *Pilate's* house with loud shoutings, through the city of *Jerusalem*, and surrounded with a troop of soldiers, who hindered the crowd from coming near, lest he should have been taken away.

III. In that state he departed from *Caiphas's* house, receiving a thousand abuses and violences by the way, and hearing nothing but blasphemies. They pulled him to one side, pushed him to another, and continually pressed him to walk on, though he was overwhelmed with weariness, after a night wherein he had suffered so much. If he happened to fall or stumble, they loaded him with strokes and injuries, as the most contemptible of all men. The more he deserved veneration by his modesty and sanctity, the more unworthily was he treated.

At the noise of those who led him along, the whole city ran together, and could not sufficiently wonder to see a man dragged through the streets with so much infamy, whom they had received as the *Messias* a few days before. His silence, his chains, the presence of the magistrates and priests, made the people judge that he was guilty, and that every thing they had admired in him, was nothing but imposture and hypocrisy. And so most of his friends declared against him: those whom he had heaped favours upon, became his persecutors; and his miracles served only to augment his ignominies.

IV. Among all these reproaches, they obliged him to take four journeys that morning. He went from *Caiphas* to *Pilate*; from *Pilate* to *Herod*; from *Herod* he returned to *Pilate's* house, and from thence he was led to *Calvary*, carrying upon his shoulders the cross whereon he was to be fastened: besides the two journeys he had taken in the night, from the garden of *Olives* to the house of *Annas*, and from the house of *Annas* to that of *Caiphas*.

Those souls that love their Saviour, may accompany him in spirit in all these stations, compassionating his pains, observing his motions,

tions, imitating the virtues he practised, kissing the ground whereon he walked, and gathering the treasures of graces which he abundantly distributes. Those who are less interior, will not cease to draw great advantages also from thence, if they compare the ways wherein they lose themselves, with those which Christ has followed in order to save them; and if they humbly implore his mercy, that they may return by his merits into the way of salvation, if they have left it; and to persevere therein, if they walk in it.

For our Lord has left us, in those six journeys, wonderful examples of all sorts of virtues, especially of patience and humility. In the first, he allows himself to be seized as a malefactor, out of obedience to his Father's will. In the second, though he be the sovereign judge of the living and the dead, he voluntarily submits himself to the judgment of his enemies. In the third, he loses that great reputation which he had acquired by his miracles, and by the sanctity of his life. In the fourth, he appears before *Herod*, as if he was the meanest of his subjects, though he was the master and creator of the universe. In the fifth, he permits his eternal wisdom to pass for folly. And in the sixth, he is placed between two thieves, Who would ever have thought that those ways were the straightest and surest road for arriving at glory, if the son of God had not followed them?

V. Is it not of those ways *David* spoke, when he said; *Lord shew me thy ways, and teach me thy paths: direct me in thy truth, and teach me; because thou art God my Saviour, and thee have I expected all the day. Remember, O Lord! thy commiserations, and thy mercies: that are from the beginning of the world, (Ps. xxiv. 4.)*

For though that holy king saw himself elevated by the hand of God to the throne of *Juda*; delivered from the persecution of *Saul*, in order to be victorious afterwards over his enemy nations; become from a shepherd, general of the army; from the last of an obscure family, the head of God's people, equal to the greatest princes of his time, and from whom the *Messias* was to descend, according to the flesh; in fine, chosen of God to be the patriarch, prophet, example, and model of the just: notwithstanding in that elevation he never forgot his first condition; but remembered, with an humble acknowledgment, the meanness from which God had raised him. He considered himself interiorly as a most contemptible man; and every time he foretold our Saviour's Humiliations, he spoke in his own person, applied them to himself, as if he had desired to be clothed therewith before-hand, and as if he had envied those who were to live under the law of grace, the happiness of having before their

their eyes an humble God, and of being able to imitate upon earth the sovereign Majesty annihilated and crucified.

That thought made him despise his own greatness, and inspired him with an ardent desire of knowing those secrets ways, so full of mercy, which were then entirely unknown. He beheld them only from afar; but he sighed after them, and approached as near to them as he possibly could. Hence it is, that though he was one of the most powerful princes of the earth, he suffered the chastisements of God, and the ingratitude of men, with as perfect a submission, as if he had had the example of an humbled God before his eyes. With how much more reason ought we to be subject to God in the evils and adversities of this life, we to whom he has so clearly discovered those divine ways, consecrated by the foot-steps of his Son? Ought we not to conjure him, without intermission, to conduct us by the same ways, and to enlighten our blindness, that we may be able to comprehend that admirable truth?

VI. If *David* had seen our Saviour in that state, how earnestly would he have wished to be taken in his stead; to be dragged through the streets of *Jerusalem*; to pass for a fool; and to suffer reproaches for the name of Jesus Christ, as many Saints have done since! But we who are very far from that perfection, and whom Christ, in condescension to our weakness, does not require to suffer for him every thing that he has suffered for us; how shall we justify the little care we take in pleasing him, and in shunning at least the ways of sin, which lead us to death? With what excuse shall we cover our refusal of being his Disciples, and of imitating his meekness and patience in the evils of this life? What contempt should we not have of ourselves, if we could truly know the state to which sin has reduced us in the sight of God?

If those who possess considerable posts in this world, have not strength enough to quit them, in order to become like Jesus Christ, they ought at least to humble themselves interiorly in his presence; to apply themselves to destroy human pride in them; to walk in the ways of the Lord, which are patience, meekness, contempt of one's self, and resignation to the divine will in sufferings; to implore his help continually, that he may not abandon them in such a difficult road; and to allow themselves to be penetrated with a salutary confusion, seeing how far distant they are from their Saviour, and that they rather chuse to walk in those ways he has condemned, than in those which he has followed.

But if in the midst of a moderate plenty, which is necessary for their exterior state, and which the Law of God does not reprove, they

they interiorly preserve christian humility, and a sincere contempt of themselves; Christ, who regards the sentiments of the heart, and not the outward appearance, shall fill them with glory when he comes, in the day of his judgment, to recompense his true imitators. But if men, who have been only *bumbled in heart*, must be glorified, what shall be the crown of those, who *bumble within*, and *bumble without*, shall have followed the humility of our Saviour in its full extent!

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ dragged through the streets of Jerusalem.

AWAKEN, O my soul! depart from the careless and drowsy state thou art in; look upon thy Saviour; consider the steps he has taken for thee; behold those eyes dejected and sunk for want of sleep; that face livid and bruised; that hair torn; and those hands loaden with chains; follow him in spirit; join thyself to him; and comprehend what thou hast cost him. He is led from *Caiphas* to *Pilate*, as a disturber of the public peace; from *Pilate* to *Herod*, as a rebel that designed to make himself king; from *Herod* to *Pilate*, as a fool; and at last from *Pilate* to the cross, as a malefactor.

Acknowledge, O sinful soul! that innocent Lamb in the midst of wolves; behold the strokes they give him, and the affronts they put upon him. Hear the blasphemies of the soldiers, the discourses of the priests, the mockeries of the *Pharisees*, and the outcries and maledictions of the populace. Represent to thyself those streets consecrated by his miracles and charity; they were, a few days ago, the road of his triumph, and now they are the theatre of his ignominies. Admire his silence in the uproar, his meekness in affronts, and his calmness in tumults. He murmurs not, nor complains of any one; and he has more patience in suffering, than his enemies have malice in ill-treating him.

II. What sayest thou at the sight of that spectacle, O unhappy soul? What sayest thou, O man of dust and ashes! and yet so proud? Behold the steps which the Son of God takes, the reproaches he endures, and the motives which animate him. O Divine Lamb! *who takest away the sins of the world*; O my God, my Judge, and my Sovereign Good! open my eyes, enlighten my mind, that
I may

I may know thy ways, and discover thereby the unhappiness of those who follow others. O Divine Jesus! whose infinite wisdom cannot be deceived, thou hast had no regard to thyself, thou hast not spared thyself when thou wast to suffer for me; and thou hast not only expiated all my criminal steps; but hast also taught me the streight ways which lead to salvation.

O Divine Light! O Eternal Truth! take pity on my blindness. After all the favours I have received from thee, I neither know thee, nor myself. Shew me thy ways; conduct me into thy truth: for I desire to have my eyes continually fixed on thee, who art my God, my Saviour, my guide, my way, my truth, and my life. Be mindful of the goodness with which thou hast borne with me, and of the patience wherewith thou hast expected me, in order to discover my wanderings to me, to make me bewail them, and to bring me back unto thee.

III. Suffer me, O Lord! here to confess my miseries, and at the same time to publish thy mercies. I have abandoned thy law, been deaf to thy voice, rejected thy caresses, and departed from thee, in order to follow by-paths, which would have led me to eternal death, if thy hand had not stopped me on the brink of the precipice. And thou, O my God! hast created me to thy own image, hast washed me in thy blood, *hast taught me the ways of life*, hast infused into my soul, Faith, Hope, and Charity, and hast brought me into the Catholic Church, to which thou hast left thy Doctrine, the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and the assurance of eternal happiness.

When I was of age to know thee, I found an infinite number of helps ready for me, and all the ways open for coming to thee. If I had faithfully followed them at that time, as I had promised in my baptism, how near should I have been to thee at present, O my God! how enlightened would my spirit have been, and how pure my heart! But, alas! wretched that I am, I have despised all those advantages, I have departed from thee, in order to adhere to the world and myself. I have followed my own will instead of thine. I believed, and my whole life has been contrary to my faith. I have put in creatures the hope I ought to have had in thee, and given to those things which thou hatest, the love which ought to have been only for thee alone.

I see, O Lord! in my life, by means of thy light, a long train of sins which cover me with confusion, and break my heart with sorrow. I distinguish those to which I am most subject, which have occasioned me the greatest wanderings, and which still hinder

in me the effect of thy mercies. Confound me not, O Lord! in the day of thy wrath, but deliver me, by the reproaches which thou sufferest, from the *eternal confusion* which I have deserved.

IV. Behold what I am, O my God! behold this miserable sinner for whom thou hast suffered so much. Behold the ways in which I have walked, after having seen those which thou hast followed. Behold what has been the vanity of my thoughts, the baseness of my affections, and the negligence of my life. Behold how I have employed the strength which thou hast given me, and the powers of a soul which thou hast created to thy image. Behold, in fine, what has been my whole occupation and my pleasure,

How different are thy ways, O my Saviour! from mine, how many times have I despised and abandoned thee? How many graces hast thou granted and promised me? and notwithstanding, I desire to be honoured and considered, whilst thou art dishonoured and abused. It is I that have been a thousand times unfaithful to thee, and it is thou that hast been treated as a perfidious person. I have run as a madman after vanities; and it is thou, O eternal Wisdom! that art accused of folly. I have robbed thee of the glory and love which were due to thee; and it is thou who art crucified between two thieves. I am the guilty, and thou art punished.

It is I, O Lord! that have deserved the treatment which thou sufferest. All creatures ought to have risen up against me, and led me through the universe with ignominy, as an ungrateful person, a traitor, and a rebel. And after all, thou not only pardonest me, O thou life of my soul! but wilt also undergo the punishment I deserve. I adore that infinite goodness; I adore that ineffable love. I conjure thee, O my God! by that same love, to change my heart, and to lead me into that straight way which thou hast taught me. *Set before me for a law, O Lord! the way of thy justifications; and I will seek after it always.* Psal. cxviii. 33. But take me by the hand, O Lord! that I may run after thee in the odour of thy perfumes: for if thou lettest me go alone, I shall fall like a child which cannot yet walk, or I shall go astray as a traveller that knows not the way, or I shall be obliged to stay by the way as a sick person that has not the strength of following thee, or I shall fly from thee perhaps as a deserter. But if thou leadest me along with thee, I shall go every where without fearing any thing; and the most painful journey will become sweet to me in thy company.

V. Instruct me therefore interiorly, O Divine Light! in the secret of thy ways. Didst thou not come upon earth to open us heaven, to overcome our enemies, to make us know thy Father, to kindle

in our hearts the fire of thy love, to disengage us from the earth, and to draw us to thee by the charms of thy beauty; to heal our evils, and to crown us with all the blessings of grace and glory? Who would ever have thought, O Lord! that the way which thou followest, should lead to the great things for which thou art come? O impenetrable counsels of the divine wisdom! happy is he, who being united to thee, O my God! contemplates upon thy designs and thy works continually.

It is by these ways that thou confoundest the proud, exaltest the humble, meltest the ice of our hearts, dissipatest the darkness of our minds, takest souls out of the abysses of sin, triumphest over thy enemies, and glorifiest thy Father. It is thereby that thou instructest, enlightenest, warmest, and enrichest us. *How beautiful are thy steps,* O only Son of the living God! how profound are thy counsels, O eternal Wisdom! how certain are thy ways, O immutable Truth! Whither do I go then, O thou life of my soul! when I follow not thee? When shall I see myself for thy sake in the state I see thee in for mine? When shall I love the contempt of the world as much as I have loved its esteem and its vanities?

In those moments wherein I suffer any thing for thy love, and wherein thou dartest into my heart, a ray of thy light, life becomes wearisome to me, and the world incommodious. I then clearly find the need I have of thee, I desire thee, sigh after thee, and would always be with thee, and never be separated from thee. But when the flesh is once satisfied, all those sentiments are lost, and all those lights vanish away. Since it is therefore true that I cannot walk in safety but in thy ways, grant, O Lord! that I may love them, seek them, find them, and follow them.

O most pure Mother of God! you who, always full of faith, of love, and of conformity to the divine will, have faithfully followed the ways of our Lord, obtain me grace to follow them for the future, and to leave those which I have followed so long. Angels of heaven, who behold and admire the divine counsels; blessed souls who formerly followed the wanderings of the world, but have entered again into the ways of our Saviour; who now taste the fruit of his ignominies, and contemplate, without any veil, such admirable truths; obtain me a ray of your light, and a spark of your love, that having had on earth the same sentiments as you, I may possess in heaven the same glory. — *Amen.*

XXXV. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

He is led as a fool to Herod's court.

THE priests and the chiefs of the *Jews* led Christ to *Pilate*, with such a noise as might make that judge believe, that our Saviour had committed some very extraordinary crime. And in order to give greater probability to that opinion, by the authority of their persons, and the zeal of religion, they themselves became his accusers; but they would not enter into *Pilate's* palace, which they looked upon as a prophane place, because it was the house of a Gentile; and they were afraid of defiling themselves on a day so holy, whereon they were to celebrate the *Pasch*.

The human heart is so blind, when it is prepossessed with any passion, that in making a scruple of violating the smallest observances, it often abandons itself, without any reserve, to the greatest disorders.

The mortal hatred which the *Jews* bore to Christ, who had been promised to them so long, and whom God had sent to them at last; the false testimonies, the contempt of the laws, the oppression of innocence, blasphemies, and ingratitude, were incapable of putting a stop to them; and they were afraid that their entering into *Pilate's* house would render them unworthy of eating the *Paschal Lamb*, and the unleavened Bread.

II. *Pilate*, who considered them as the chief of the nation, came out to them, to hear them: but when he heard them speak of *Gallilee*, where Christ, as they assured him, had taught false doctrine; and of *Nazareth*, which was said to be his country, he sent him to *Herod*, on whom those places depended, and who was then at *Jerusalem*. *Herod* and *Pilate* were at variance, but that deference of *Pilate* gained *Herod*. From enemies, as they had been, they became friends, and Christ was the bond of their reconciliation. As they were incapable of a greater good, our Saviour delivered them at least from the hatred they bore one another, and gave them peace so necessary between those who are charged with the conduct of others.

What would he not have wrought in them, if he had found their hearts better prepared, and more proper to receive the blessings which he was desirous of bestowing on them? For the love of
Jesus

Jesus cannot remain without action; and when the hardness of our hearts resists him, he nourishes himself with patience, and expects a better disposition.

III. The *Jews* with great heat laid before *Herod*, every thing they had to say against Christ; but they were badly heard: for besides that prince's having wished for a long time to see that extraordinary man, whose doctrine, sanctity, and miracles had been much commended to him; he easily perceived that these tumultuous accusations were the pure effects of envy and hatred: and so he made small account of them, and thought only of satisfying his curiosity by the sight of some prodigy.

But our Saviour, whose life was a model of perfection to all men, and to all states, was pleased on this occasion to teach apostolical men, who are sometimes obliged to treat with great personages, what their views and hopes ought to be. It was an example extremely necessary: for the eyes and majesty of princes have but too much power to shake the constancy of the best intentioned persons, who may be invincible every other way. There are few whose virtue is proof against the favour of the great; and the desire of pleasing them, is always a most dangerous temptation for the servants of God. For that reason Christ appearing at *Herod's* court, was pleased to give them the following important instructions.

IV. First, he did not go thither of himself; but was dragged thither by force, to teach them, that they ought to go to the court only out of necessity, and not by inclination.

Secondly, our Saviour had no regard to the desire which that prince expressed of seeing some miracle; because he knew that at that juncture, a miracle would procure no glory to God, and would only serve to satisfy the curiosity of a man. He who in so holy a profession, does not propose to himself at court the glory of God, as his principal end, and seeks only to please the prince, is extremely blameable: for besides his hopes being often deceived, he loses interior peace, which is the happiness of his state, and the fruit of true virtue.

Thirdly, Christ would not employ *Herod's* power, to deliver himself from that of the *Jews*, nor to defend his own reputation, though he might very easily have done it: for one single miracle would have had more power over the mind of that prince, than all the accusations of the Priests and *Pharisees*. But he would teach men to support the good opinion which others have of them by the purity

purity of their virtue, the testimony of their own conscience, and
 the interior communication with God, which are such powerful arms
 for resisting the evils of this life, and acquiring the goods of heaven:
 whereas the favour of kings cannot secure us from human miseries;
 and serves commonly for nothing else but filling our hearts with
 vanity.

In fine, our Saviour has shewn us by his example, to expect
 nothing from the court but what he found there himself; that is a
 great deal of contempt, because he would not satisfy *Herod's* vain
 curiosity. For a thing so precious as the hope of man's heart, by
 which eternal goods can be obtained, ought never to be separated
 from its solid foundation, which is God, to be supported by the arm
 of the flesh, which is incapable of sustaining it long.

V. *Herod*, who had been informed that Christ was a great
 prophet, asked him several questions concerning his doctrine, and
 concerning what was to come, out of a desire of seeing or learning
 something extraordinary. But, besides our Saviour being unwilling
 to do or say any thing that might hinder or delay the death which he
 had resolved to endure for us, he saw likewise that whatever he
 should then do, could serve only to satisfy the curiosity of a prince,
 who had no disposition to follow the truth; and that there was no-
 thing to be hoped for, either to his Father's glory, or the salvation
 of men: wherefore he remained in a deep silence and answered
 nothing, either to *Herod's* questions, or the *Jews* accusations. They
 did not fail to take advantage of his silence, by saying that he was
 convicted, and had nothing to answer to the crimes whereof he was
 accused.

There were at court some very different opinions concerning our
 Saviour's person. Some spoke with admiration of his works,
 whereof they had been witnesses: others affirmed there was impos-
 sible and enchantment therein: some maintained that magic did not
 restore life to the dead, nor sight to the blind: many, in fine, re-
 garded him as a man sent from God; every one judging thus
 according to his own disposition, of the doctrine and miracles of
 Christ. He knew all these different judgments, without taking
 any notice of them. But although his patience and modesty ought
 to have procured him the veneration of those who were present, yet
 he was treated as one that was stupid, and knew not how to profit
 of an occasion which might have been so advantageous to him.

VI. There are none so easily deceived as princes, in what regards
 themselves. As they are surrounded with flatterers, and commonly
 full

full of a good opinion of themselves; they are persuaded that every one ought to seek their protection, and esteem themselves happy in pleasing them. Thus *Herod* did not doubt but Christ was a weak man, and without any spirit; since he neglected so fine an occasion of freeing himself from the hands of his enemies. He judged that his great reputation was an effect of the people's ignorance who admire every thing; and that he might not seduce any one for the future, he thought it was necessary to lead him through the city with a public mark of folly. He caused him therefore to be cloathed with a white garment, and in that condition sent him back to *Pilate*, to shew him what he ought to judge of him.

Behold how the king and court treated Christ: behold the esteem they had of the wisdom of God, in the houses of those who pass for the sages of the world. Let us beseech our Saviour, that, in christian courts, where he is acknowledged and adored for the only Son of the Living God, the humility, meekness, and patience which he has taught us, may not be treated as folly, as they were at *Herod's* court.

It cannot be expressed how much this new garment redoubled the cries and mockeries of the soldiers, who led our Saviour from *Herod's* palace to that of *Pilate*, nor what crouds of people assembled from all parts of the city to see him, they put upon him all the affronts that an insolent populace is wont to do to those who pass for public fools. He then lost the reputation which he had acquired by his sanctity and miracles; and suffered all those indignities with invincible patience.

VII. He whom we regard as the eternal wisdom of God the Father, as the only Son of the living God, as the supreme and infinite goodness, and as the spotless mirror of the divine majesty, vouchsafed to pass upon earth for a fool. O secrets of the conduct of God, how little are you known unto men! The world fears a doctrine so pure and so contrary to its desires; for that reason it endeavours to render it ridiculous, that it may weaken the authority thereof; and employs, for destroying it, kings, courtiers, priests, doctors, and all the people. But this eternal and omnipotent truth shall subsist in spite of all their efforts; and the means which they have invented, for obscuring it, serve only to make it shine with greater splendor.

VIII. Christ would consecrate in himself this admirable truth which he has since taught us by his apostle; (1 Cor. iii. 18.) *If any one among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise.* He would accomplish the designs of his eternal wisdom.

wisdom, overcome the world, establish the church, and people heaven by his humiliations, without troubling himself about the judgments of the world: to make us comprehend that a heart capable of the glory of heaven, ought never to think itself either cast down by the contempt of the world, or exalted by its honours.

This also made St. Paul say, that *the wisdom of this world is folly with God: (ibid.)* and that *the prudence of the flesh is death; (Rom. viii. 6.)* because all the wisdom of the world, with its delicacies concerning honour, cannot exalt man to eternal glory, for which he was created. Thus it is a real folly, whose views terminate in acquiring riches, pleasures, favour, reputation, and other such goods, which finish with the death of the body, and often cause the death of the soul. On the contrary Christian Wisdom despises the world, abhors its vanities, shuns its honours, neglects its favour, embraces humiliation, turns all its thoughts towards heaven, and being content with the interior goods which it possesses, it never esteems itself more glorious, than when the world has the greatest contempt for it.

But because the world is unacquainted with those divine goods, it regards those as fools who are truly wise in Christ, though the apostle affirms, that *the world was not worthy of them (Heb. xi. 38.)* and loudly declares that *the world is crucified to him, and he to the world. (Gal. vi. 14.)* As if he said: the world takes me for an accursed person, and despises Christ crucified, whom I preach to it; but I also treat the world in the same manner, and in my turn regard it as an object of malediction and horror. Whatever hope it may flatter me with, whatever advantage it may promise me, it shall not deceive me, because I consider all its grandeur as dirt, that I may acquire that divine wisdom which is unknown to it. Let it therefore glory in its pride as much as it pleases; let the wise boast of their knowledge as much as they will, they must at last, if they would be eternally happy, have recourse to humility and to the folly of the cross: for they will find nothing in the wisdom of the world but deceit and perdition.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ regarded as a fool at Herod's court.

O JESUS! eternal wisdom, the light and love of my soul, my lord, my master, and my sovereign good! who can say that thou sufferest not freely? Who can doubt but that the injury which thou sufferest, comes rather from thy love, than from the malice of thy enemies? Thou appearest before a king, who had long desired to know thee, to hear thy doctrine, to be witness of thy miracles, and who felt a secret joy at thy arrival, in hopes of seeing himself the wonders which they had spoken so much of to him. Has thy wisdom abandoned thee? hast thou lost that infinite power? canst thou not by some prodigy, in order to confound the *Jews*, gain the admiration of the prince, discover the most secret thoughts of those who were present, engage the hearts of courtiers by the charms of thy doctrine, and thus manifest thy greatness and divinity?

Thou seest, O Lord! with what rage the *Jews* accuse thee. Every place resounds with their outcries, lies, and false witness. Thou art interrogated, and answerest not. Miracles are desired from thee, and thou workest none. It is hoped thou wilt have some complaisance to the will of a king, and thou lovest so favourable an occasion of gaining him, and of confounding thy enemies. Thou authorisest their injustice in passing for a convicted criminal, and thou art silent, and concealest thy wisdom, thy power, and thy majesty; and sufferest a king, with all those that surround him, to despise thee, to regard thee as a fool, and to make thee be led, with a robe of ignominy, through the streets of *Jerusalem*, as a seducer of the people.

II. O eternal truth! how little the world knows thee! how hidden are thy ways from the proud and the wise of the world! Grant that I may know thee; and permit me not to go astray in the ways of carnal prudence. I adore thee, O sovereign truth! I adore thee, O wisdom of the father! I adore thee, O light of souls! to whom thou shewest so clearly, in thy divine person, that pure doctrine which thou hast taught both by thyself and by thy apostles; that we must become fools, simple, and ignorant, if we would be wise.

Infinite thanks be given to thee, O Lord! for having hidden those truths from the *proud* and *wise*, and for having revealed them to the *humble* and *little*. O that we did but imitate thee in thy reproaches! O that we had but that interior spirit, which makes us find

find a solid glory in contempt, by the advantage there is in resembling thee! O that we had but those humble sentiments of ourselves, and reckoned for nothing the esteem of men; how happy should we be!

When wilt thou engrave in my soul, O Lord! those divine truths? I adore them; but alas! how far do I find myself from them! I desire to be seen, heard, and praised; I tremble at the very thoughts of contempt. Whence comes this, O Lord! Where then is that secret pride concealed, which rules over me? And how can it subsist in the sight of thy humility? Thou knowest, O my love, and my glory! that if thou dost not purify my interior, and givest me not a heart recollected, and attentive to thy presence, I shall never know that truth, nor taste it, nor love it as thou hast loved it. Pardon me, my wanderings and vanities, O my God! Draw me after thee, by the means of that light, and permit me not to desire, love, or follow any other way, or any other doctrine but that which thou hast taught me.

III. O Jesus despised! it is by thy contempt that thou comest to us; it is thereby that thou instructest and charimest the souls that are faithful to thee. When thy perfect imitators forget themselves, that they may only remember thee; when they place their glory in thy ignominies; when they are interiorly intent on thee, they abandon the care of human things, and pass for unprofitable, foolish, and stupid people; they do not change their nature. Whence comes it then that the world no longer esteems them but as men buried alive, annihilated, good for nothing, and incapable of any commerce? Who has rendered them so retired, indifferent, and unsociable, but thou, O divine love! who art *more piercing than a two edged sword; stronger than death; and more jealous than hell.*

It is thou, O my Jesus! who workest all those changes in souls. Thou possessest them interiorly; teachest them in secret, a wisdom which the world knows not; and discoverest to them a beauty which eyes do not behold. Thou illuminatest them with a light which flesh does not perceive, and givest them a discerning which shews them that what appears outwardly is so low, so poor, and so contemptible, that they can no longer depart from what occupies them within.

IV. When shall I be transformed into thee, O divine spouse of my soul! When I behold in thee all those wonders, and thy servants experience them in themselves, what am I thinking on still to esteem the favours of the world; and to afflict myself with the contempt of thy humiliations? *O beauty so antient and so new, too*

late have I begun to love thee. But though I love thee late, grant at least that I may love thee with a pure and sincere heart. Alas! I fly from thee, O my God! and continually depart from thee. Thou makest thyself be felt in the bottom of the heart, communicatest thyself to those who abide in themselves; and I live in a continual dissipation; because my attention is divided on the eyes of all men that behold me; and to please them, O my God! I lose the sight of thee.

Convert me, O Lord! and I shall be converted; change me, and I shall be changed; instruct me interiorly, and then though I be a fool in the eyes of the world, I shall be wise before thee. Happy is he that is a fool for thy sake. Happy is he that is despised for thee, who desires neither to be seen nor esteemed by any but thee. O my sovereign felicity!

V. O eternal word! O wisdom of God! O light of those who live in interior darkness, and in the shadow of a mortal ignorance teach me how thy conduct agrees with thy words: for thou hast said, that *better is a good name, than much riches.* Prov. xxii. 1. Is that a good reputation to be esteemed a fool, stupid, and an impostor? It is having a bad reputation to pass for a covetous, proud, impious, revengeful, and envious person; but it is having a good one, to be esteemed holy, just, pious, prudent, and learned. Thou art thought wicked, a seducer, and a fool; where then is that good reputation which thou wouldst have preferred to all riches?

Discover to me this mystery, O Lord! and enlighten the darkness of my soul. I have hitherto believed that a *good reputation* consisted in pleasing men; in being praised, approved, and considered by them; and to attain thereto, I have given myself a thousand troubles, have sacrificed my goods, health, and repose; and when my hopes were deceived; I have fallen into sadness and trouble. Then instead of having recourse to thee, O my God! I have forgotten thee, and my heart has launched out, in vain complaints and foolish words.

I speak not of those unhappy moments wherein I have taken pleasure in offending thee; have placed my glory in things which thou hatest; and have been willing to make my vices pass for virtues. I only mention here the blindness I have been in concerning the purity of thy doctrine. I have imagined, that thy law obliged me to preserve the reputation of a good man, even to the prejudice of my repose. O vanity! O folly! O blindness! Thou O Lord! who art the glory of the just, make me comprehend how
advantageous

advantageous it is to pass for an ignorant and foolish person in the eyes of the world. Teach me to be silent, for thy love, when I am despised, to forget every thing, to lose all things for thee, to be unconcerned about human judgments, and to regard thee only, as my judge, my wisdom, my treasure, my glory, and my happiness.

How wise am I, O humble Jesus! when I love thee! How foolish am I, when I lose thee! How happy am I, when I sacrifice myself for thee! How miserable am I, even when I possess all things without thee! How just am I, when charmed with thy beauty, I despise the world! How blind am I, when I love any thing with thee, which I love not for thee! O that I could one day behold myself unprofitable and contemptible in the eyes of the world; but at the same time possessed with thy love, O my Jesus! *plunged, absorbed, lost, and transformed in thee.*

VI. How can I desire life, but to imitate thee in thy reproaches, O humbled Majesty! Can I desire to be more wise and enlightened than thou art, O eternal wisdom! Take me out of this world, O Lord! if thou foreseest that I am ever to love or esteem any thing to the prejudice of those holy truths which thou teachest me. To what purpose is wisdom and understanding without thee, O divine light!

Here it is that my darkness must be dissipated; and that I must begin to undeceive myself concerning the false glory of the world. Embrace me, O humbled Jesus! and receive me as a companion of thy humiliations. In this moment I renounce all esteem, all glory, all reputation among men. Let others be *esteemed*, and me *despised*; let them be *in honour*, and me *in oblivion*; let no creature think on me, and let none but thee, O my God! *hear me, love me, and regard me.*

VII. How far distant have my views been from thine, O my Saviour! and how many faults shall the fire, which thou hast brought upon earth, find in me to be consumed! Therein thy love shall find a heart to be transformed, thy light shall find darkness to be dispelled, and thy wisdom an ignorance to be instructed. Inflame me, O Lord! Consume me, instruct me, and humble me in the eyes of the world; and exalt me in thy sight. When shall I behold that happy change? O that I should never depart from thy presence! O that every thing besides thee should cause disgust and horror to my soul! O that all creatures should abandon me, forget me, and despise me; and that thou alone, O my Jesus! wouldst possess this heart, which is made only for thee!

O sad and miserable life! how long and dangerous art thou at the same time! Put an end to it this moment, O Lord! if I am ever to forget thy humiliations: or at least, put an end to the attachment I have of its vanities, that I may only be occupied with thee; that I may remember thee at all times, in all places, in action and rest, in health and sickness, in life and death.

Thou knowest that I cannot comprehend those sublime truths without thy light. Give me therefore what thou commandest me, and command me what thou please: for without thee I can do nothing but ruin myself, and I can do all things with thee, O my God! my strength, my defence, and my salvation!

O most holy Virgin! you who so faithfully practised those truths, and gained by your humility the only Son of the eternal Father, into your possession; he esteemed you, and you despised yourself; the angel called you *full of grace*, O Mother of God! and you regarded yourself as his handmaid, because you beheld not in yourself the perfections, which the angel beheld in you. You carried in your womb the expectation of Nations; but you hid your treasure, and the world esteemed you not, though you were *full of grace*. How remote am I from that way, O sacred virgin! The Son of God passes for a fool; you who are the mother of the Son of God, and the queen of angels, remain unknown in the world; and I, a faithless servant, what shall I say to excuse the pride of my life? Take pity on me, O mother of mercy! give me a share of the dispositions of your heart, and obtain me the love of humility, wherein you know, by your own experience, true wisdom consists. Angels of heaven, who are full of God, and prostrate yourselves continually with a profound humility before the throne of the Lamb: blessed souls, who owe your glory to the humiliations of our Saviour, among the eternal praises which you give him, mingle some prayers for this miserable sinner; obtain of this humbled God, to inspire me with a sincere desire of my own abjection, to inflame me with his love, and to make me deserve thereby to bless him eternally with you. *Amen.*

XXXVI. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

The coldness of his friends, and the triumph of his enemies.

GREAT sufferings seldom come alone, and they are commonly succeeded by several others, which are sometimes as sensible as the first. This is what Christ experienced all his life, but particularly in his Passion, every circumstance of which alone was sufficient to torment him. Such were, when he was seized in the garden of *Gethsemani*, the treason of *Judas*, the flight of his other disciples, the insolence and cruelty of the soldiers; and upon the cross, the dislocation of his bones, the weight of his body, and several other such particularities, which we must endeavour to omit nothing of, when we meditate on our Saviour's passion; that we may compassionate all his pains in particular, and give him thanks for them, since they cost him so dear, and are so profitable to us.

Thus among the reproaches which he endured, when he was dragged with so much ignominy through the streets of *Jerusalem*, we may consider, as circumstances which gave him an extreme pain, though few persons reflect thereon, on one hand, the loss of his reputation in the minds of his friends, whose esteem he had acquired, by the greatness of his miracles, the purity of his doctrine and the holiness of his life; and on the other, the triumph of his enemies, who enjoyed the fruit of their malice. For, that he might more fully shew us the extent of his charity, he never spared himself in any thing; because he was pleased, that in all kind of sufferings that can happen to us, we might find in him a companion, a model, and a comforter.

II. We must not doubt but those who had followed Christ so long, who had been witnesses of his wonders, and had seen people in crowds run after him, even into the desert, were extremely shaken at the sight of so prodigious a change: for the people do not penetrate far into the divine counsels, and are guided much more by what strikes the senses, than by right reason and the understanding of the truth. Thus, after having admired Christ when the winds, the seas, the sick, the dead, and the devils, obeyed him; when they saw him cloathed with that robe of ignominy, his hands bound behind him, a rope about his neck, and led by the soldiers and executioners, their reason was disturbed. Even those whom he had healed, began to doubt whether their cure came from him, and whether it would continue.

That

That people whose minds were in suspense betwixt the miracles which our Saviour had done, and the reproaches which he endured, knew not what side to take. They sometimes judged that so many miracles could only come from a man sent from God: sometimes, if that man was innocent, he would not be treated with so much rigour. Thus they wavered in their own thoughts; and their ignorance of the divine mystery, joined to the natural inclination men have to diffidence, still augmented that uncertainty.

Christ saw clearly their little faith, and he was sensibly touched therewith, out of the zeal he had for their salvation. This was a pain peculiar to himself, and which the martyrs were not able to feel; because they knew not the bottom of men's hearts. Even his most intimate friends, as the apostles, *Magdalen*, *Martha*, *Lazarus*, and some others, with whom he lived more familiarly, and whom he had instructed with more care, though they had no doubt of his innocence, because they were persuaded of his sanctity, and of the hatred of the *Jews*; were shaken nevertheless in the faith of his divine person, seeing he neither said or did any thing in his own defence. The sincerity of their love, and the weakness of their faith, caused in them that interior trouble, which was so much the more sensible to Christ, as he was more concerned at their infidelity, than at his own sufferings.

III. On the other hand, he beheld his enemies triumphing and applauding themselves in the success of their injustice, vomiting against him a thousand blasphemies, calling him *impostor*, *seditions*, *magician*, and thus turning the glory of his works, the excellence of his doctrine, and the greatness of his power, to his own confusion.

He saw them insulting his friends and disciples, when he met them; and drawing the same advantage from his silence, as if he had been convicted of all the crimes whereof they accused him. He saw them treating his *miracles* as *magic*, his *truths* as *lies*, and his *holiness* as *folly*. He saw that what was most divine in him, drew upon him the greatest reproaches; that the malice, hatred, envy, and blasphemies of his enemies, passed for the zeal of religion, for a sincere love of their country, and for an effect of prudence. One must have experienced that sort of injustice, in order to form any idea of that which Christ then suffered, and to comprehend that as much as the most consummate virtue can do, is to support itself on those occasions.

But because our Saviour would suffer in his humanity more than all the martyrs and other saints have suffered, he chose amongst his sufferings,

sufferings, not only those wherein the whole perfection of virtue is practised, but also those which may serve as an example to all sorts of afflicted persons. *David*, in order to testify how clean his heart was from any hatred against his enemies, consented to see them triumphing over him, as deeming it the greatest evil that could befall him, if he had ever given way to revenge; and he made this imprecation against himself: *If I had rendered to them that repaid me evils, let me worthily fall empty from my enemies. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it, and tread down my life into the earth, and bring down my glory into the dust.* And notwithstanding, behold what Christ has suffered, with all the circumstances which could render that pain infinitely sensible to him. (*Psal. vii. 5.*)

The perfection which our Saviour here teaches his servants, is so pure and sublime, that we may beseech him with *David*, (*Pf. lxxvi. 1.*) as the greatest felicity that can happen to us in this life, to *bless us, to illuminate his countenance upon us, and have mercy on us: that we may know his way upon earth; in all nations his salvation.* For those examples are so high and divine, that all nature is astonished thereat, and cannot attain thereto without a particular grace.

IV. In the first place, because we see in the reproaches of Christ, that humiliation joined to a good conscience, is a surer way for gaining heaven, than all the esteem of the world, how just and holy soever it may appear. Christ knew how important it was, for the sanctification of men, that he should be acknowledged and adored; and yet he judged that this great design would be better accomplished by ignominy than by praises; though that divine Redeemer could never be either sufficiently praised, or praised falsely. How much surer then is that very way for us, who may always justly believe ourselves unworthy of all praise in the sight of God? For the honours which one man pays to another, are commonly false or insincere, serve only to blind him concerning his own failings, give him more esteem for himself than he ought to have, to introduce pride into his soul, destroy virtue therein, and weaken in it the desire of pleasing God, who alone truly knows what we are, and what we deserve.

But he, who is under little or no concern about the opinion of men, who on the contrary is afraid of their praises, and desires only to please God, possesses in the midst of contempts an interior peace and consolation, which the world cannot comprehend. He is content with being known only by God alone, his true judge; is full of confidence in the dangers and miseries of this life; and happier a thousand times amidst the humiliations he endures for Christ, than worldlings are in the highest splendor of their glory.

O that

O that persons, aspiring to angelical perfection, did but fully comprehend this truth? If they had the humbled and annihilated Jesus continually before their eyes, how content would they live, how full of consolation, of peace, and of light would they be! Many praise and esteem the humiliations of our Saviour; but there are very few that love them. And yet experience teaches us, that God conducts by that way such souls as he designs to raise in his church to an eminent sanctity; and makes them find inestimable treasures in the most profound humiliations.

V. In the second place, Christ teaches us how perfect our faith ought to be, and how pure our charity; that is to say, elevated above the esteem and affection of the world. He knew that the love and faith of his disciples would be shaken by his humiliations; because their faith was founded upon his miracles, and their love upon his favours; but he judged it better to put their faith and love to so severe a trial, and to put themselves in danger of losing both, than to be but imperfectly known and loved by them. He foresaw, that being humbled by their own weaknesses, they should be better disposed to receive his spirit which rests only on the humble; and which was one day to confirm their faith, and purify their charity.

Indeed it happened that those who had been disturbed by the reproaches of our Saviour, afterwards placed their whole glory in being like him, so far as to triumph with joy, *that they had been reputed worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus* (Acts 4. 41.)

Many love Christ, whilst nothing happens to them contrary to their desires; but there are very few who, finding themselves deprived of sensible graces, and persecuted by the world at the same time, persevere in the purity of love. Though God commonly prevents souls with the blessings of his sweetness, in order to draw them to him; yet he will be loved for himself, and not for his gifts. Hence it is that he hides them so often, and deprives us of the sentiment of his presence, to try whether we love him purely and disinterestedly. For if the soul runs after the heavenly bridegroom, only when it feels the odour of his perfumes; if it thinks itself abandoned, when it finds them no longer, if it then goes to seek comfort among creatures, it is manifest, that it loves the gift more than the giver, and the consolation of God more than the God of consolation. To love Jesus crucified, despised, and afflicted; and to find him no less beautiful in his reproaches, than in his sweet communications, is the proof of pure love,

This

This is a language very foreign to him who has not relished Christ, and does not make it his chief occupation to know and love him; wherein notwithstanding consists the end for which we were created.

Although God bears with an unfaithful soul in this imperfect state, and though his goodness forsakes it not; yet it is certain at least, that it shall spend its life in a great poverty of interior benefits, and not be sensible of what it loses. On the contrary, a soul that gives itself up intirely to the love of Christ, and to the desire of imitating him, shall find him so jealous, that it shall no longer have the freedom of loving any thing with him, not even his gifts. Those are great favours; but who can express what God communicates to those that love him purely? What we know of this matter is, that faith assures us that God is infinitely good, infinitely amiable, and infinitely liberal; and that *pure love* obliges us to love *what he is*, and not *what he gives*. When love is *such*, it is always *constant*, what ever trouble befalls us, either within or without; because it considers nothing but God alone, who changes not; and it no less adheres to God when he afflicts, than when he comforts; when he chastises, than when he caresses.

VI. In fine, our Saviour was pleased to suffer the contempts and triumphs of his enemies, for the consolation of his servants, against whom it so often happens that wickedness prevails: for those that love God purely, and apply themselves with all their power to procure his glory, and the salvation of their neighbour, are almost continually opposed by the wicked, who cannot suffer any person to interrupt them in the licentiousness wherein they live: and God sometimes permits his friends to draw no other advantage from their zeal than contempt; and all their virtue to pass, even among good people, for the heat of interest or passion.

One must have experienced this contradiction, to comprehend how troublesome it is. The true servants of God, seeing the storm rising against them, have no difficulty in yielding: they easily persuade themselves that God will not have them to succeed in their undertaking; but requires something more conducive to his glory, which is their patience, their chastisements, and their humiliation. For there is a secret consolation in suffering as a saint, and in being regarded as a man persecuted for justice; but nothing is more grievous than to suffer as a wicked person, and as a hypocrite. Then it is they have need of an extreme fidelity for entering into themselves; for renouncing their own views, how holy soever they may appear to them; for allowing themselves to be ill-treated by every body,

body, without complaining; and for not imagining that they are in the right, and others in the wrong.

They ought then to have their eyes continually fixed on Christ, who was treated as a convicted criminal; to pray for their persecutors; to judge themselves unworthy of the happiness there is in suffering for the glory of God, and the salvation of their neighbours; and to think on the contrary, that God often makes use of his own enemies for punishing his unfaithful servants.

Let them therefore abandon the care of their reputation to him, and esteem themselves too happy in having some share in the humiliations of Christ: for then, if God requires any other thing of them for his glory, he will furnish them with the means, and give them strength to put it in execution. But because persecution suffered for justice, is not always so easy to be distinguished as it is difficult to be supported, Christ was pleased to suffer in silence the dereliction of his friends, and the triumph of his enemies, in order to teach us, that on such occasions we ought to be silent, to leave to God the care of our justification, and to begin by overcoming the world in ourselves, till we can overcome it in the world.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in the coldness of his friends, and triumph of his enemies.

WHAT then is that extreme abjection wherein I behold thee, O my Jesus! Why dost thou suffer thy friends to abandon thee, and even thy miracles and virtues to become a subject of humiliation to thee, and of triumph to thy enemies? In every thing thou hast done, suffered, and taught, thou hadst in view the salvation of souls; why then dost thou expose those that are dearest to thee to the danger of losing the faith? Why dost thou allow thyself to be despised to such a degree, that those who have heard, followed, and loved thee, seem ashamed of thee? And how should they not be shaken when they see thy enemies triumph, thy apostles taking flight, and thy whole flock dispersed; and when they behold thyself oppressed, humbled, and abandoned? Thus thou sufferest the loss of thy reputation, and the danger of thy friends; and *all that* thou sufferest for me?

How

How wilt thou be loved purely, O my God! that faith which is limited to what is seen, is not agreeable to thee; and thou art not content with a soul that loves thee more for thy gifts than for thyself. Thy Disciples who had loved thee, amidst the applauses that were given thee, and the benefits they received from thee, could not but still love thee in abjection. Thou wouldst try their faith and love by thy reproaches, in order to draw them from the number of those who loved thee only out of interest, and to elevate their thoughts above what appears in thee.

For that reason it was necessary thou shouldst send them the Holy Ghost, and give us admirable examples of the love which thou requirest of us. For thou art infinitely *pure*, infinitely *sincere*, and infinitely *perfect*, thou art not content with seeing in our souls an ordinary purity of love: thou requirest of us an entire disengagement from every creature. Thou desirest to be loved *alone*, O God of love! and thou wilt be loved *alone*, not for what we expect from thee, but purely for what thou art.

II. Thou wilt have us banish from our hearts every thing that is not thyself, how great, how holy, or how excellent soever it be; that thou alone mayst find place in a soul which thou lovest so purely. How happy is he that loves thee in this manner! When shall I love thee thus, O my Lord and my God? Alas, how far am I from it! how full am I of favourable thoughts of myself! how many views of self-love are there in me! how often am I occupied with the desire of pleasing men, of being known and loved by them!

If my friends are discontented with my conduct, if they happen to lose the esteem they had for me, or if they do not correspond to that which I have for them, I fall into trouble: I would have them to praise my actions, guess at my intentions, and approve of both.

And yet *that*, O Lord! is but the least part of my misery, and of that shameful slavery, whereto I am reduced by the passion I have of seeing myself esteemed by every body. Permit me not, O my God! any longer to follow those corrupt desires: thy patience suffers them; but thy sanctity condemns them: may thy goodness root them out of my heart.

Alas! in the very moment that I implore thy mercy, I seek perhaps my own interest more than thy love. If I have a holy and virtuous friend, I am united to him rather by a sentiment of human affection,

affection, than by a pure and spiritual friendship. When wilt thou heal my soul of this corruption?

How rare on earth is that pure love, which desires but thee alone, O my God! but how excellent is it? It is above the holiest works, the most virtuous friends, and all the goods of heaven and earth; because it confines me to thee alone, and makes me leave all for thee, as thou hast left all for me.

III. Can it be surprising to see me renounce all things, for testifying *my love* to thee, after what thou hast done for testifying *thine* to me? Though I had been thy last end and sovereign felicity, as thou art mine, what couldst thou have done more than to despise for my sake *honours, friends, and a reputation so justly acquired*? Thou wast pleased to lose all these advantages, O Lord! in order to teach me how pure thy love is, and what the purity of mine ought to be. And I who am but a worm of the earth, think I do a great deal when I renounce base pleasures and vain honours for thee.

What good dost thou find in me, O my God! to desire that I should be wholly thine, and that I should sigh after nothing but thee alone? But if I loved thee thus, what should I not find in thee? How happy should I be, if I were only possessed with thee? When shall I see myself discharged from the weight of this flesh, which draws me always towards the earth? Thou elevatest me, and it dejects me; thou inflamest me, and it freezes me; thou purifiest me, and it defiles me; thou fillest me with thyself, and it deprives me of all thy blessings. O that the fire of thy love could at last consume in me the corruption of the earthly man!

IV. O Divine Jesus! in this moment, and for ever, I renounce all creatures. I renounce my parents, friends, pleasures, liberty, reputation, and every thing that is capable of possessing my heart. Supply, O Lord! by thy mercy, the defect thou seest in this resolution, that it may be such as thou desirest it. Wash my soul, O Divine Purity! that it may be thy abode; and purify it, that its whole weight may carry it towards thee.

If for loving thee purely and only, O my Sovereign Good! it be necessary I should lose the friendship, favour, protection, and esteem even of the holiest men; I heartily consent thereto. Let all things be wanting to me, provided I possess thee; let all creatures abandon me, provided thou be with me. Let people treat me as they please, provided I may live for thee, and die in thee.

O that

O that I could attain to that purity of love! Come, O my Saviour! come into my soul! operate therein by thy mercy, what thou hast taught me by such great labours. Since thou knowest my life is but a kind of death, if thou livest not in me; grant I may become so pure, as to deserve that thou mayest be my life, my love, and my glory. Let me then be deprived of all help, support, and consolation, I will not complain: for thou alone wilt suffice me. O if that happy moment might soon come!

V. Here I confess my infirmity and misery before thy mercy, O my God! that thou mayest heal me, and give me what thou requirest of me. Thou hast ordered me that when I *shall have done all things which are commanded me, to say I am an unprofitable servant*. Luke xvii. 10. because the good I am able to do comes from thee, and not from myself. But this day thou teachest me in thyself, O eternal Truth! how pure and disengaged my heart ought to be, in the good works which I do; that if they are deemed bad, if they are defamed, if they are made use of for persecuting me, not as a saint, which would be sweet; but as a wicked person, a profligate, a hypocrite, I may not allow myself to be disturbed; and that I may suffer every thing that shall be said against me, with a peaceful heart, and a sincere desire of imitating, loving, and possessing thee.

When I consider these truths, I love them; when thou inspirest me with them, I desire the practice of them; when thou shewest me them in thyself, I absolutely desire to become like thee. But, alas! how weak am I, when any occasion of practising them presents itself. I confess it, O Lord! my flesh sinks under the weight of that cross, my mind goes astray, my faith is shaken, patience escapes me; and I have then an extreme need of thy assistance.

But thou, O my Saviour! though thou wast pleased to assume the form of a slave, thou couldst not be called an unprofitable servant, since thou alone givest to all men what is profitable to them for eternal life. Thy doctrine is pure, thy works are divine, thy life is holy, and all *that* is the effect of thy own, and not of any acquired virtue. Notwithstanding thou permittest thyself to be accused of falsity in thy words, and of malice in thy actions; that they might become a subject of humiliation to thyself, and of glory to thy enemies; whom thou permittest to be justified, whilst thou art condemned; praised whilst thou art blamed; and to pass for wise and religious men, whilst thou art regarded as one wicked and foolish.

O Sovereign

O Sovereign Truth! how far art thou above our knowledge and how insupportable to nature is such treatment! However thou wilt have thy servants know thee, love thee, and imitate thee in that state; and not to find thee less beautiful in thy humiliations than in thy glory. Thou wilt have me to follow thee, obey thee and embrace thee as tenderly when thou comest to me with the cross, as if thou camest to me with all the blessings of thy sweetness.

VI. I acknowledge that it is most just, O my God! but how can I ever attain thereto, being so weak as I am? I tremble whenever any occasion of suffering appears. Fortify me, O Lord! and separate this heart from the earth, that it may no longer resist thy will. Remember that in the garden of *Olives*, the sight of the torments which were prepared for thee, drew from thy veins a sweat of blood. What then shall I do, I who am weakness itself? I will cry towards thee; I will invoke thee as my Lord and my God who alone can work in me what I cannot expect from myself. Thou desirest that after having done all that is commanded me I should still call myself *an unprofitable servant*; because thou art the author of all the good I do.

Yes, O Lord! I acknowledge before thee, that I am the most unprofitable, weak, and miserable of thy servants. And therefore I throw myself into thy arms, and beseech thee by thy infinite goodness, to work in me the wonders of thy grace. I ask thee not the deliverance from the evils I endure, but the strength of enduring them for thy love. I do not even ask thee for thy consolation which would be capable of mitigating them; but satisfied with thy love and imitation, I ask thee only for the grace of living and dying upon the cross.

VII. I know my iniquity, O Lord! and I consent to be treated by thee in this life as a criminal. I consent that my enemies should triumph over me, provided I do what I ought; that I should not esteem myself better than others; that I should not flatter myself, and that I should suffer persecution for justice: but that I should rather persuade myself that I suffer much less than I have deserved. I beg also of thee the grace of loving my enemies, as if they were my true friends; and to regard them with a sincere respect, as the ministers of thy providence and of thy will.

Discover the strength of thy spirit, by rendering me, of an unworthy servant as I am, as faithful in thy service, and as subject to thy will as thou desirest me to be. Grant that I may never distinguish

guilt

guish him that persecutes me; nor consider whether he be good or wicked; nor mind the stone that hits me, but always to regard the hand that throws it at me; nor seek to justify myself; but that all my defence and consolation may be in imitating thee.

Open me thy treasures, O Lord! bestow them largely upon me, and shew in thy poor creature the riches of thy grace: take from me every thing that is sensible, and unite me to thee by the bonds of pure love: for I desire nothing but thee alone, O my God, my love, and my all!

O most holy Mother of God! you who are the support of the weak, and the refuge of sinners, obtain me this favour. You know that my soul was created to love God above all things: and that it cannot find its felicity without him: let me then desire him, seek him, follow him with all my heart, esteem only what can conduct me to him, and fear only what may separate me from him. Blessed spirits, assist this banished wretch, in elevating my heart to God with whom ye are filled; that being content with him alone, I may love nothing besides him; and that I may never be troubled at any thing but what separates me from him. *Amen.*

XXXVII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

Barabbas is preferred to him.

IT was expressing a great contempt for Christ, to compare him to *Barabbas*, and to judge him worthy the same punishment that was due to a thief, a seditious person, a murderer, and a disturber of the public peace. The malice of the *Jews* forgot nothing towards confounding the Son of God with malefactors, and endeavoured to gain by their obstinacy, outcries, and threats, what they could not obtain by the ways of justice. For having led our Saviour to *Pilate*, early in the morning on the day of the *Pasch*, the solemnest day in the year; and that magistrate having asked them what they accused him of, they took it amiss, that being the chief of the nation, he should not be believed guilty when they brought him; and answered haughtily: *if he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee.* *Pilate*, offended with that answer, said to them: *take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law,* not thinking that they could, either according to the *Roman* laws,
or

or the rules of natural equity, judge him without knowledge of the matter, *John* xviii. 30.

But because they designed that Christ should be crucified, and because it was not permitted them to condemn any one to the cross; they accused him of several crimes which were commonly punished in that manner; as of having caused an insurrection of the people from *Galilee* to *Jerusalem*, designed to make himself a king, and forbidden tribute to be paid to *Cesar*.

Though all these accusations seemed incredible, and suspected by *Pilate*, in the very manner in which they were proposed; yet he thought proper to dissemble, and immediately referred the judgment to *Herod*. But when he saw afterwards that that prince had had no regard thereto, and that they demanded with great eagerness, but without any proof, the condemnation of Christ, he himself would interrogate him in secret, concerning his kingdom and origin. Our Saviour denied not that he was a king, affirming only that his kingdom was not of this world, and that if it had been so, his subjects would have fought, to have hindered their king from falling into the hands of the *Jews*.

II. This answer deserves to be considered attentively, because the sense of it is obscure. What! if our Lord had been a king of the earth, would his earthly subjects have defended him against his enemies? and because he is the King of Heaven, his heavenly subjects defend him not? Are these then less faithful, or less affectionate than those of the earth would be?

But we must know that those two sorts of subjects have very different views. Those of the earth maintain the cause of their king, without knowing whether it be just or unjust, profitable or hurtful; whether the success thereof is to be happy or unhappy; but those of heaven, always illuminated with the divine light, discover the nothingness of earthly goods, and know that they gain more in losing than in possessing them. And so they defend not the honour and life of their king: for besides their king's not desiring it, they see that his death and ignominies are to fill heaven with saints.

It is for that reason also, that they do not deliver their friends, living on earth, from the evils of this life; for fear of withdrawing them from the cross. And as things are seen in heaven with a much clearer light than on earth, they are governed there also by rules infinitely more just and certain.

But

But *Pilate* gave occasion for Christ's revealing a great mystery, by saying to him: *art thou then a King?* To whom Jesus answered, *thou sayst it; I am a King. For this was I born, and for this I came into the world, that I may give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, beareth my voice.* *Pilate saith to him; what is truth?* John xviii. 37. And after having put this question to him, he departed without waiting for an answer thereto, to go to speak to the *Jews*. How full of instruction are these words, for all those that desire to follow the doctrine of our Saviour! for by comparing their affections and conduct with that doctrine, they will easily know whether they walk according to the truth, or whether they suffer themselves to be seduced by the false goods which it rejects.

As the affair here in hand is no less than the loss or salvation of the soul, it is of the utmost importance to every one to behave therein with such precaution and vigilance, that they may not fall into the misfortune of being rejected by Jesus Christ. But, alas! how much is it to be feared that many imitate *Pilate's* negligence, asking slightly, what is truth; without giving himself the leisure to wait till he is answered. Because he did not concern himself about being illuminated with the divine light which he had before his eyes, and knowing what he was not willing to follow.

III. He comprehended not therefore what our Saviour had begun to say of his heavenly kingdom, and of the truth. Besides, not finding any thing in him, after having carefully interrogated him, that clashed with *Cæsar's* interest; and seeing that *Herod* had sent him back without condemning him, he judged that if that man was guilty, it could only be for having spoken against the customs or religion of the *Jews*. Therefore he resolved to cause him to be scourged, in order to appease the commotions raised among the people on his account, and afterwards to let him go.

But the chiefs of the *Jews* were not satisfied with that punishment, which seemed to them too small: they were even afraid lest Christ, who observed so strict a silence in public, had satisfied *Pilate* in private, and lest he had discovered to him their hatred and injustice. Thus seeing all their measures in danger of being frustrated, they redoubled their outcries; and *Pilate*, in order to save Christ, or rather to deliver himself from their importunity, proposed this expedient to them.

He knew that the governor of *Judea* was accustomed every year at that time, to grant the *Jews* the life and liberty of a criminal, whom they themselves should chuse, because their forefathers had been delivered on the same day from the captivity of *Egypt*. He

therefore proposed two prisoners to them, Jesus and *Barabbas*, not doubting but they would abandon *Barabbas*, newly convicted of sedition and murder, and that they would demand the deliverance of Christ, from whom they had received a thousand favours, and whose modesty, patience, meekness, and equality amidst so many injuries, clearly shewed his innocence. But the contrary happened: for the people spurred on by the chiefs, demanded all with one voice, the life of *Barabbas*, and the death of Christ; and obtained both. Behold the recompence which our Saviour received for so many benefits! It cannot be expressed what pain that unworthy preference occasioned him; and it is better to leave it to the meditation of pious souls, than to endeavour to express it here by words.

IV. The Son of God clearly shewed in his person at that time, what he had taught his Apostles before, for encouraging them to suffer the hardships which the world was preparing for them. *If the world hates you, know that it hated me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you,* John xv. 18. For the world loves what belongs to it: it protects thieves, absolves murderers, delivers the seditious, favours malefactors; and it condemns the Author of life: it puts to death the Prince of heaven and earth, and prefers the guilty to the innocent.

Behold what the world is which we serve, which we adore, to which we sacrifice our quiet, our life, our conscience, and our eternity; which persecutes virtue, supports vanity, and honours vice; which deceives, and is believed; which gives nothing but false goods, and yet it is followed.

It will be very profitable for those, who disgusted of the world, sincerely love and follow Christ, to consider here two things. First, in what manner the world treats the Son of God, by preferring to his Divine Majesty, a murderer and a public thief. Secondly, that though the world loves the wicked, that love is terminated in their eternal ruin and confusion; whereas Christ loves the good only in order to crown them with glory; and the wicked in order to justify, and save them.

V. It must be owned however, that he who shall enter into the sanctuary, and shall know the interior dispositions of Christ, and his infinite love for sinners, will judge that it is doing an injury to that divine Saviour, to reckon among his sufferings, the preference given above him to murderers and malefactors. On the contrary,

the purity of his love made him find that exchange delightful; and it is true that to his prejudice the life of those was saved whom he came to deliver by his death.

For though nothing can be imagined more unjust than the choice of that ungrateful people, who judge their benefactor unworthy of life, and prefer to him a convicted malefactor; yet it may be believed that Christ had suffered a much greater pain, if, in order to preserve a life to him which he designed to give for all, they had put that murderer to death, however wicked he might be. For though so base a comparison could be nothing else in the *Jews*, but an effect of blindness and sin, it was in Christ an appointment of the eternal counsel, who was pleased to teach sinners thereby, that in their necessities they may offer the life and blood of their Lord for themselves.

We ought therefore to be persuaded, that Christ seeing the *Jews* required the life of *Barabbas*, consented thereto with all his heart, offered himself to the eternal Father for *Barabbas* and for all men, and obtained that that exchange should be extended to all sinners that would be saved, that none might fall into despair; and that every one might be persuaded that he who continually sought sinners during his life, and who, at his death, was accompanied with a thief from the cross into paradise, will not refuse his glory to those sinners that shall have recourse to him.

VI. This hope is certain on the part of Christ; because he really gave himself for us: but it is very uncertain on ours, because we exchange him every day for those very things which separate us from him. We become like the *Jews*, every time that we abandon God by sin, to adhere to the creature. The exchange we then make is still more unreasonable than that which the *Jews* required: for, in fine, *Barabbas* was a man for whom our Lord was pleased to die; but to prefer to Christ mean things, and shameful sins which he has hated so far as to die for destroying them, and vanities which he has so highly rejected, is a disorder which ought to cover us with confusion, and take from us the boldness of only lifting up our eyes to heaven: for to sin mortally is nothing else but to banish our Saviour from a demesne which he has acquired by his blood, and to receive sin into his place, which fills hell with horror and confusion. Man nevertheless, not only suffers that enemy in his soul, but he also sleeps, eats, and lives peaceably with him.

Are we not as guilty as the *Jews*? for they acted from passion; were transported with envy and hatred against Christ, whom they knew not to be the Son of God; but we who adore him, acknow-

ledge him for what he is, and expect from him our eternal salvation, and all the goods of grace and glory, without being prejudiced by hatred, we offend him with so much facility, that we esteem as a trifle the misfortune of losing him, and of exchanging him for the vain pleasures of this world. Behold how we behave in regard of him; and what cannot be sufficiently admired is, that he is always patient in bearing with us, and loves us no less tenderly than he loved us on the very day that he died for us.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ in the preference of Barabbas.

HOW shall I acknowledge, O Jesus son of the living God! the excess of thy love? Thou art not content with having taken the flesh of sinners, remaining with them, receiving them with goodness, and expiating their crimes; but being incapable of becoming truly a sinner, thou wast pleased to be put in the number of public malefactors, such as murderers and robbers; to be even judged more wicked than they, and less worthy of life; and to be at last crucified in the midst of them, as more guilty than they.

What shall I render thee, O Lord! for all the favours thou hast granted me? What shall I do to correspond to that infinite love wherewith thou hast prevented me? Thou must have had a great desire of being like me, since thou hast taken upon thee all my miseries, sin only excepted; whereof thou hast however taken the appearance. I can give thee nothing, O my God! but this heart full of sins; but this soul, whose misery and malice thou beholdest: receive it, notwithstanding its unworthiness, and treat it according to thy will. For all the reproaches which thou wouldst have me to suffer for thee, will not come near the smallest part of those which thou hast suffered for me.

II. Pardon me, O Lord! all the time I have employed in the service of this world, which has not known thee, and was so insensible of thy benefits. What! *Barabbas*, a thief, a seditious person, and a murderer, is deemed more worthy of life than thou, O life of my soul! Why have I loved this unjust world so much? Why did I not always hate it? Ought I to have lost thee for pleasing it? But what else could so corrupt a world do, but condemn thee,

O infinite

O infinite Purity, and protect those that belonged to it. This ungrateful world has soon lost the remembrance of thy miracles, examples, and virtues. It has forgot the meekness with which thou treatedst it, the wisdom with which thou instructedst it, the power with which thou healedst it, the patience with which thou sufferedst it, and all the love which thou shewedst it.

Thou didst not offend any person. None came from thee, without help and consolation. Thou didst not desire the riches of this world; thou soughtest neither its honours nor pleasures; and yet when it could have delivered thee from death, wherewith thy enemies threatened thee; it delivered a thief, and crucified thee: behold the world that I have loved and served, to which I have sacrificed my cares and life! I am still afraid of losing it, am desirous of gaining it, and I lose myself with it. Give me, O Lord! all the contempt and hatred that I ought to have for it, that I may esteem nothing but thee alone, love nothing but thee alone, and desire and seek nothing but thee alone.

III. When shall I be in thy company, persecuted with thee, and despised by the world like thee, O thou love of my soul! What good can the world do me, or what ought I to expect from it, when it treats thee so, O my God! thou who art the sovereign good? How much time have I lost, how many thoughts have I lost, and how many cares have I lost! for I reckon as lost, all that I have not sacrificed to thee. Repair, O Lord! all these losses, by thy goodness; inspire me with a perfect horror of the world, that I may begin to love thee perfectly. Let the world despise me, that I may resemble thee; let it hate me, that I may love thee; let it reject me, that thou mayest receive me; and let it treat me in such a manner, that if I am so miserable as to resist thy love, the persecution of the world may at least constrain me to seek thee.

IV. But since the world rejects thee so shamefully, O Jesus, thou life and hope of my soul; come to me; I will receive thee, I will embrace thee, I will die for thee, and I will acknowledge thee, in life and death, for my Lord and my God. Let the world say of thee what it pleases, let it treat thee with as much indignity as thou deservest respect, I adore thee, O my first principle and last end! I adore thee, O sovereign truth! I adore thee, O treasure of Heavenly blessings! I adore thee, O companion and remedy of sinners! I acknowledge thee for my God, in the midst of sinners: and whilst a murderer is preferred to thee, I confess that thou art the Author of eternal life, and the Father of the world to come. I cannot sufficiently admire the love which reduced thee to such
extremities;

extremities; and my greatest desire is to find myself inflamed therewith, both in time and eternity.

V. How many miseries shalt thou find in me to be destroyed, O infinite mercy! When I consider on one hand what I am, and on the other, what thou hast suffered for me, I feel myself so penetrated with confusion, that I wish I were able to hide myself within the bowels of the earth. I have deserved to be swallowed up therein, and much more, yet the *Jews* who prefer *Barabbas* to thee, are less guilty than I am.

They exchanged thee for a man whom thou wouldst save, and for whom thou wast going to die; they did it out of the envy and hatred wherewith they were animated against thee; and as for me, O Lord! I have often exchanged thee for the meanest things in the world, without any heat of passion; but only for the pleasure I found therein; not from any particular hatred, but by the disorderly inclination of my heart. I have abandoned thee, O thou God of my soul! for vanity, for things which thy holy law forbade me, and for shameful and abominable sins.

Thou didst then represent to this miserable heart, by thy secret inspirations, the good I left, and the evil I did to myself: and I was so blind, that I chose rather to taste the vain pleasures of creatures, than to possess thee, O eternal beauty!

VI. How many times, O my God! have I despised thee, in order to seek the most contemptible things in the world? How many times have I stifled thy divine Spirit, to do what the spirit of darkness suggested to me? Thou desiredst to live and reign in my heart, O my sovereign good! and I was desirous that sin should reign in it. Why do not my eyes melt in tears? Why do I presume to appear before thee? How can I lift up my eyes to thee, after having despised thee thus? Pardon me, O merciful Father! such great indignities.

O that I had never lost thee, that I had never banished thee from my heart! but, alas! I have exchanged thee for death, O true life of my soul! I have preferred the ignorance and blindness of the world to thee, O eternal wisdom! I have quitted thee to walk in darkness, O divine light! I have resisted thy spirit, to satisfy my flesh; have violated thy law, to content my pride; and have banished thee, to make the devil and his works take thy place.

Let that same mercy, O my God! which obliged thee to suffer for me, make thee also compassionate my misery. I cast myself here at thy feet, and in thy presence renounce every thing that I have loved more than thee. Grant that this my will may be as perfect as thou desirest.

Enter, O divine Jesus! into this soul which is thine: possess an abode which belongs to thee by so many titles. Live and reign with me, since thou art my Creator, my Saviour, and my King. Let me begin, in this moment, to hate what I have loved; and let me no longer love any thing but thee alone. For thou hast made me for thyself, O my God! and I shall never find true rest but in thee.

To what purpose do I live, if I live not for thee? Receive me then, O Lord! heal me of my evils, defend me from my enemies, and do thou with me what thou plearest. Chastise me, try me, and afflict me, provided thou possessest me, and reignest alone in this soul, which thou hast created after thy own image, and redeemed by thy blood.

VII. When I cast my eyes upon thee, O my God! and upon the infinite goodness thou hast for me, I feel an extreme desire of seeing my heart consumed with the flames of pure love. But what were the sentiments of thine, when thou hearest that they spared the life of a murderer, and required thy death? How agreeable was that moment to thee, and how conformable was it to thy desires? For when thou preachedst the kingdom of God to the Jews, thou didst eat and converse with sinners; and there was more reason than the people imagined for calling thee the friend of sinners; because thou didst defend them, and loudly declaredst that thou camest for them. At present they would have thee suffer death in the midst of some, and be substituted in the place of others. What joy was it to thee, O Lord! to see those associated with thee, or exchanged for thee, whom thou camest to seek.

Behold how thou dealest with us, O my God! behold what thy love is! Thou wilt be condemned, that we may be absolved; and die, that we may live. But if that moment is so happy for thee; if it is thy hour, O Lord! let it be mine also. By that love with which thou givest thy life for me, I beg of thee thy love; I beg of thee thyself. I desire to possess thee entirely, O my God! but thou alone art all I desire; thou wilt suffice me, and I shall be more content in having nothing but thee, than in having also something

something with thee. Give me what thy love begs of thee for me.

VIII. Before I was born, before I knew thee, and could ask any thing of thee, thy love obliged thee to give me thy life, thy blood, thy honour, and thy divinity; in a word, all that thou hast, and all that thou art. At present, when by thy mercy I acknowledge thee for my sovereign good, desire thee, and invoke thee with all my heart; how canst thou refuse me what I ask thee? I ask thee nothing that regards the body, or human life; I ask thee, O my Jesus! for thyself. Give thyself entirely to my soul. This request cannot displease thee: for whatever desire I have of possessing thee, thou hast still a greater to give thyself to me.

Behold thou art already offered for sinners; they are resolved that thou shalt die instead of *Barabbas*: thou art confounded with such as I am, and I know the joy thou hast on that account. Come then, O Lord! into this house of sin: for as such, it is thine; and thou, in quality of the Saviour of sinners, art mine. Remember that at thy entrance into the house of *Zacheus*, the sinner, thou saidst: *salvation to day is come to this house*, Luke xix. 9. Enter into mine, O my salvation and life! enter into this heart, full of sins and miseries; delay not, O Lord! for at thy arrival I shall be healed; but enter into it in such a manner, O my true joy! so as never more to depart from thence; and so as I may never afflict thee.

Thou seest how desolate thy abode is, and how incapable this barren earth is of bearing the fruits which thy hand has planted therein. Make good therein, O my Saviour! the name thou bearest: save this soul, purify it, enlighten it, re-establish it, embrace it, and consume it, in order to renew it entirely. What I beg of thee after that, O my God! is, that I may receive nothing therein but thee alone, and that thou mayest not, from henceforth, suffer any thing in it but what is agreeable to thy eyes.

XXXVIII. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

His being scourged.

PILATE knowing the innocence of Christ, and the envy of his accusers, urged him to defend himself; and surprised at a silence and tranquillity, so rare in an accused person, desired that he would at least say something for his justification. But our Saviour spoke so much the less, as his innocence spoke the more clearly for him. Whatever *Pilate* could say to the *Jews*, they answered only by confused voices, requiring, that Jesus should be crucified.

It must be owned, that there is nothing more dangerous to eternal salvation, than the state of those, who bent on evil by passion, obstinacy, or the pleasure which they find therein, no longer hearken either to reason, justice, or truth; and who have no other law than that of their corrupt desires. Such is the disposition of the damned; and such also was that of the *Jews*: they were so fixed in the resolution they had taken of putting our Saviour to death, that the devil himself, who had inspired them with it, could not remove them from thence.

For that angel of darkness beholding in Christ an innocence and meekness above what is human, he was more afraid than ever, lest that death should occasion the destruction of his empire, and lest the man whom they designed to crucify, should be the Son of God that had been promised by the prophets. For that reason he tormented *Pilate's* wife by nocturnal fears, that she might prevent her husband from consenting to the death of Christ. She sent therefore to tell her husband, that *he should have nothing to do with that just man*, because she *had suffered many things in a dream on his account*. Matt. xxvii. 19. But the obstinacy of the *Jews* prevailed over all the endeavours of the devil and *Pilate*. So true it is, that man has not a more dreadful enemy of his salvation, than his own liberty.

II. *Pilate* seeing that the desire he expressed of saving Christ, served only to irritate the fury of the *Jews* still the more, resolved to have him publicly scourged for those things which they falsely imputed to him, in order to appease the *Jews* by that punishment, and afterwards to deliver Christ from death. What strange justice! for saving the life of an innocent person known as such, he is condemned to a cruel and shameful punishment, without any other reason than to satisfy the hatred of his accusers. They seemed to consent

consent to that expedient, because it gave them an opportunity to consult together upon the means which they might make use of, for obtaining from *Pilate* a sentence of death.

Jesus therefore is carried into the Pretorium, and stript of all his clothes, without his saying a single word, or shewing the least resistance. He then offered to his eternal Father that innocent flesh which was going to be torn, and that precious blood which he had desired so long to shed for us. He is fastened to a pillar, and without regarding the law which prescribed the number of stripes, the executioners followed nothing but their own fury therein. They struck him without measure, and tore him so cruelly, that his whole body was but as one wound, and seemed rather fied than scourged. The number of stripes is not certainly known: some saints affirm that our Saviour received above five thousand.

III. Who can express what confusion and pain he then suffered? Some holy souls, to whom our Saviour was pleased to discover the state to which he was reduced by his scourging, for satisfying their love, have been so deeply affected by that melancholy spectacle, that they have spent their lives in continual sorrow, and in a most lively sentiment of love for their Saviour,

As the bee builds in her hive a great number of little cells, not only for containing her honey therein, but also for bringing up her little ones; in like manner it seems Christ was pleased that his body by scourging, should be quite full of wounds and openings, that his children might enter therein, establish their abode in them, and there find a most delicious nourishment. Thus those whom our Saviour, by a particular grace, makes sensible of his sorrows, and who apply themselves to the contemplation of this mystery, not contenting themselves with considering it in general, they examine all the circumstances thereof, pass from one wound to another, reflect upon them in particular, and draw from every one an ineffable love, and a divine sweetness, wherewith their soul is nourished.

IV. Our Lord in that cruel torment, was meek, even, and calm, without expressing either hatred or trouble; he not so much as opening his mouth to complain, nor turning away to avoid the strokes they gave him; but received them all as peaceably as if he had not felt them. He was as a lamb before its shearers, ready to suffer every thing without murmuring or resistance, as if he had been convicted of all the crimes whereof they accused him.

What he suffered in his body he offered up to his Father for the redemption of men; and his Father accepted it joyfully, as a most

most agreeable sacrifice for our sins. Thus Jesus at the same time satisfied both the excess of his own charity, and the justice of his Father. From his so long suffering with an extream pain the delay of that baptism of blood, it is easy to comprehend with what sentiments he received it.

V. In this model it is that all the saints have learned after what manner they ought to treat their bodies, and subject them to the spirit. For whilst we are in this life, our soul has no greater enemy than our flesh: this flesh is always rebellious; it will neither suffer bridle nor yoke; it follows its terrestrial inclinations without reserve, which its senses also favour; it pursues the objects which it desires with so much violence, that the spirit is often dejected thereby, which alone gives it more trouble than all its other enemies joined together.

This is what made *St. Paul* sigh, after all the favours he had received from God: *I am delighted*, says he, *with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I perceive another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and holding me captive in the law of sin, which is in my members. Unhappy man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 22.

As the Saints desire nothing so much as to see themselves perfectly subject to the law of God, and to his holy will; so nothing is more troublesome to them, than to feel in themselves the revolt of the flesh. Hence it is that *St. Paul*, though he had received the first fruits of the spirit, and had been confirmed in grace, yet nevertheless he chastised his body, *lest perhaps*, says he, *when I have preached to others, I myself may become a reprobate*, 1 Cor. ix. 27. And if the saints have persecuted their flesh in this manner, to hinder it from being the cause of their ruin; what shall become of those that spare it, and flatter it with all things?

David, who was a man after God's own heart, for having permitted his eyes to look upon the wife of another, fell into adultery and murder. *Solomon*, whom God had rendered the wisest and most happy of all the kings, his predecessors, by giving too great freedom to his senses, went thereby so far at last as to adore the gods of his idolatrous wives. If all the sanctity of *David*, and all the wisdom of *Solomon*, could not hinder their fall, when they allowed themselves to follow the pleasure of their senses, what shall be the fate of those whose life is spent in seeking what may satisfy their body? It is to expiate and put a stop to this disorder

disorder so common among men, that our Saviour was pleased his innocent flesh should be so cruelly torn.

VI. Behold what has produced those great austerities, practised by the christians since the coming of Christ, and unknown to foregoing ages: hair-cloths, iron chains, and a continual application in mortifying the senses, lest they should hear, see, say, or taste any thing that may defile the purity of their heart; and that the flesh being subject to the spirit, may be no longer an obstacle to the divine communications.

We have a great many examples of the holy cruelty which these heavenly men have exercised against themselves: but it will be sufficient to mention here what is related by *Palladius*.

Two Solitaries reading the holy Scriptures together; and one of them having asked the other, what he thought of the place they had read? he desired him to repeat it to him, because he had let himself be distracted, by looking upon a husband-man ploughing the ground; but he was afterwards touched so sensibly with that distraction, and with the small liberty he had allowed his eyes, that in punishment thereof, he put about his neck a very heavy iron chain, which, being fastened to another which served him as a girdle, kept his body so bent, that he could only see at his feet. He also condemned himself never to go out of his cell, but when he went to church, and he persevered the space of forty years in that voluntary punishment.

His disciples asked him one day, why he did not sometimes lift up his eyes to heaven, to bless God and give him thanks. I know very well, my children, he answered them, that it is good to look up to heaven, and to praise God in his creatures: but because the flesh and the devil continually incite me to evil, I am glad to employ these two enemies in tempting me to lift up my eyes to heaven: for though I should be overcome in that temptation, they will obtain no great victory, since God will not be offended: and if I am victorious, they shall receive the more confusion, and I shall live in greater safety. An admirable answer and altogether worthy of a pure soul.

VII. It is therefore a holy precaution, recommended by Christ, and authorised by his example, not to delay watching over ourselves till the time of temptation, and the danger of falling: but to prevent, by mortification of body, sin which reigns in us, and in which we are conceived; that this body may no longer rise up against the soul, or the law of God: or if it attempts it, let it be immediately

immediately brought down by the privation of lawful things; let it be wholly occupied in desiring necessities; and when possessing them but with difficulty, it may no longer seek those that are forbidden.

In a word, the true christian ought almost to do in regard of the body, what those do that are slaves to it in regard of their souls; they neglect it, take no care of it, give it not even what is necessary for it, and let it want every thing in its own house, whilst they abundantly furnish the flesh, which is born a slave, with all the pleasures it desires.

VIII. But he who has not the courage of imitating the penance of the saints, may, in order to overcome the flesh, make use of another most sweet, and at the same time very efficacious means; which is to apply himself seriously to what may procure the purity of the soul, and an union with God; that is, to the frequent use of the sacraments, and to the practice of mental prayer. These means, faithfully practised, subdue the flesh at last: for prayer by degrees puts a stop to the liberty of the senses, the dissipation of the mind, and the irregular motions of the heart; it renders the soul more watchful over itself, and more careful in its duties.

Let us finish this matter, by the observation of St. Cyprian, who teaches, that as one is not pleased with a meek and agreeable servant, when he is lazy and unprofitable, but would have him be laborious and indefatigable in his master's service; so, we ought not to esteem our body, but when renouncing idleness and pleasure, it employs itself with all its strength in the service of Christ; and the more it labours in this place of banishment, the better it acquits itself of its duty. (*Lib. de virg.*)

CONTEMPLATION,

On Christ in his being scourged.

NOW is the hour, O my Jesus! in which thy so pure and innocent flesh is to be torn, thy veins are to be opened, and thy precious blood shall be shed for my cure. What heart can behold, without trembling, so cruel a sentence put in execution against thee, O my only and true God! Let it rather be put in execution against me, since it is I who have sinned. No form of justice is observed

observed on thy account, O my God! *Pilate* finds thee innocent, and tells the *Jews*, that he will correct and punish thee. What can he correct in thee, O Infinite Purity! for what can he punish thee, O Innocent Lamb! he knows thy innocence, though thou sayst nothing to maintain it; and he will chastise thee only to satisfy the hatred of thy enemies. All laws are violated in thee alone, who hast observed the whole law, and fulfilled all justice.

A malefactor is punished in order to strike a terror into others, rather than be obliged to punish many; but thou, O my God! art punished only for satisfying thy enemies; and no other rule is followed in regard of thee, than the malice, envy, and hatred of the *Pharisees*. A cruel scourging is the means that is chosen for delivering thee from death, in order to condescend thereby to the will of thy accusers, although they accuse thee falsely. Mayest thou be praised for ever, O my Saviour! May the angels, heaven, earth, and all creatures, bless thee eternally!

II. But all this happens not by chance: thou thyself ordainest it so, O my God! Thou hast desired, during thy whole life, to see thyself covered with blood, and laden with reproaches. *Pilate* is deceived in his judgment; thou sufferest a cruel injustice, but satisfiest thy love. That sacred fire, which burns in thy heart, is insatiable; and the measure of its activity, is to observe no measure; because it desires to consume every thing, and even to consume thyself wholly in my service. It is under no concern that the laws be observed; and that they proceed, on thy account, according to the order of justice; because it is resolved not to spare thee; and to sacrifice thee without mercy, for the salvation of sinners.

O divine love! is it possible thou shouldst have so great power over thyself, and so little over me? I love thee, O my Jesus! and my greatest desire is to be consumed with thy love. Burn not alone with that divine fire, grant that I may burn with thee; thou requirest it, and canst do it, O Lord! do what thou canst, and suffer me not to resist what thou willest.

III. Thy love could not bear thee to be treated with any sort of humanity. They strip thee of thy cloaths without respect, tie thee to a pillar, scourge thee cruelly, are wearied with scourging thee, relieve one another, and have no pity on him who had pity on all the miserable. Instead of forty stripes, ordained by the law, they gave thee above five thousand, and made but one wound of thy whole body: thou appearest like a leper; and from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, there is no part entire in thee.

O my

O my treasure and my love! O thou life of my soul! I am so seized with sorrow and astonishment, that I cannot speak; but I cast myself at thy sacred feet, kiss that ground moistened with thy blood, and there weep for my sins which caused thee such inhuman treatment, confessing my misery, and expecting thy mercy. I will not depart from that place; I will remain fixed to that spectacle, run over all thy steps one after another, and taste the divine sweetness which thou hast hidden therein.

IV. There it is thou educatest, with so much care, the souls thou lovest; it is in the hollows of that rock they find the celestial honey wherewith thou nourishest them. As a most affectionate mother, thou there warmest thy children with thy love; as their true father, thou heapest all sorts of blessings upon them, and conductest them to the perfection of the interior life. There they live in thee, become like thee, and sigh only after thee.

I can no longer say with *David*, that *the sparrow also hath found herself a house; and the turtle-dove a nest for herself, where she may lay her young ones*, (Ps. lxxxiii. 4.) and that I can find no retreat. Neither will I say with thee, O Lord! that *the foxes have kennels, and the birds of the air nests, but I have not where to lay my head*, (Luke ix. 58.) for thou hast prepared all those that seek thee in tribulation, with a charming retreat, where thou receivest them, and protectest them against every thing that can hurt them. Happy is he who never departs from thence, has not sought his rest elsewhere, and has always sighed after thy sacred wounds, O my God! and plunged himself therein with all his heart.

V. O Jesus! thou life of my soul, and the sovereign remedy of all my wounds; why art thou so cruel to thyself, and so merciful to me? Was it not I, O innocent lamb! that ought to have been scourged, since it is I that have sinned? I have offended thee by my whole body, and all my senses; I have subjected them to the disorder of my heart, to the world, and the devil; and thou knowest, O infinite wisdom! that though penance should cover my whole body with wounds, it would be but a small matter for the satisfaction I owe thee, and for the cure of the mortal wounds which I have given my soul. Thou knowest how deep and shameful they are, and yet thou seekest me, receivest me, bearest with me, nourishest me with thy blessings and shewest thyself to me all torn with stripes. O love! that always burnest, and art never consumed, change my life, my body, and soul, and consume me entirely with thy divine flames.

VI. Thou

VI. Thou knowest, O Lord! that labour is the portion of slaves; and that the most laborious are the most estimable. It is just therefore that the body should labour continually for the service of the soul, whose slave it is born, till it becomes in heaven the companion of its glory. But, alas! I have done quite the contrary. I have always flattered my body, served it, and subjected my soul to it; and in order to satisfy it, I have lost thee, O my Sovereign good! As a faithless, slothful, and disobedient servant, I have wasted the talents which thou hadst given me. And thou, O innocent lamb! whose body, always submissive, was the faithful companion of thy blessed soul, thou treatest it as an enemy; and in order to spare me, thou makest it suffer the punishments which I have deserved, O infinite goodness! O love without example!

I offer myself to thee, O my Jesus! suffer me to be fastened to that pillar, instead of thee; or at least, let me share with thee the stripes which thou receivest. Thou art meek, charitable, and indulgent, in regard of me; and hast for thyself nothing but rigour and severity. Thou abandonest thy body to all the cruelty of thy enemies, who tear it unmercifully and without measure: but when thou chastisest me, O Merciful Father! all thy strokes are numbered, thy chastisements measured, and always proportioned to my weakness; thou even accompaniest them with grace, that I may suffer them with merit; and the tenderness of thy heart makes thee also compassionate me in all the evils wherewith thou afflictest me. What ground have I then for complaint, O my Lord and my God!

I am truly much to be blamed, when I complain of thee; and yet more, when I do not receive from thy hand the afflictions that befall me: but I am infinitely so, if finding nothing difficult for satisfying my desires, the smallest matters seem insupportable to me when I suffer them for thee. Change, O my God! by the uprightness of thy spirit, such unjust sentiments: chastise, correct, and try this miserable sinner. Work in me what thou pleasest; but keep me always subject to thy conduct, and united to thy providence. Permit me not to desire any thing else but to suffer for thee. Cease not to afflict me; let me love and relish nothing but the cross; and if my flesh revolts, redouble thy strokes, till it be entirely subject to thy spirit.

VII. I adore thee, O most pure and holy blood! I will not depart from thee, O Lord! and I will remain fixt to thy feet till thou hast washed me with that precious liquor; may it flow upon me abundantly, may it purify and heal me: for from it alone it is that I expect the cure of my wounds,

It is said, that the blood of little children is a remedy for the leprosy, and thy apostle affirms, that *thy blood cleanses our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God* (Heb. ix. 14.) O Divine Lamb that takest away the sins of the world, cast thy eyes upon this leper wholly covered with ulcers, quite full of sins and imperfections; wash me in that blood which flows from thy whole body. Thou saidst to St. Peter: *unless I wash thee, thou shalt have no share with me* (John xiii. 8.) Ah, Lord! behold my head, my hands, my desires, my will, my understanding, my works, my thoughts, my affections, and my senses, interior and exterior; wash them all: for all is defiled; purify all: for all is corrupt; heal all: for all is sick. Change me by the virtue of thy precious blood, that I may be united to thee, O infinite purity! and follow thee every where, O most innocent lamb! for thou art at the same time, my shepherd, my guide, and my nourishment.

O most pure Mother of God! you who conceived that sacred body in your chaste bowels, that it might be torn for me; you who in forming and nourishing it gave the purest blood in your heart, that that blood might be shed for my remedy: and you who have participated more in its infinite virtue than all other creatures, take pity on this sinner, obtain me the grace of having a lively feeling of the pains of your only Son, of following his examples, of hating my sins, which have reduced him to that state wherein I behold him, and of consecrating the remainder of my life to his service; that so many sufferings endured for me, may not be unprofitable to me. O heavenly *Jerusalem!* that art continually watered with *the fountains of our Saviour*; and which receivest all thy beauty from his wounds, let some drops of those delicious waters, whose fountain you possess, fall upon this barren earth. Love, bless, and glorify that God of mercy for me; supply, O ye blessed souls! both by the light and by the love wherewith ye are filled, my darkness and my languor, that I may burn one day with you with the same fire wherewith ye are consumed. *Amen.*

XXXIX. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

His crowning with thorns.

THE executioners, weary with scourging our Saviour, and seeing nothing more to be torn in his body, looked him from the pillar, wholly bathed in blood. He went immediately to seek

seek his cloaths, which the soldiers had thrown here and there. He was obliged to go through the whole court, and to bear the raileries and insolencies of those miserable wretches as he passed along, who also added insults to their cruelty. He suffered their affronts as he had suffered their stripes, with an invincible meekness, modesty, and patience; and having found his clothes at last, he put them on again.

Though he was in a condition capable of touching the hardest hearts with compassion, and of disarming the cruellest hatred, those inhuman wolves were not softened thereby. The blood of that innocent Lamb, which they had shed, even served only to provoke their thirst; and they invented, for tormenting him again, a kind of punishment which had been unknown till then.

Behold the effect which sin naturally produces in the soul that commits it, with impudence and pleasure. One sin committed leaves behind it the desire of committing others. Even when one is weary of the crime, one is not satisfied therewith; and the will of sinning is retained, though the power of it be lost.

One of the greatest illusions of sinners, is to imagine they shall free themselves from the temptation, by satisfying it. The experience of sin does only augment in us the inclination which induces us thereto; because according to the observation of *St. Gregory*, 25 *Mor.* 12. the sin that is not destroyed by penance, draws us by its own weight into another sin. The soul that loses the grace of God by sinning, loses also the force of resisting the occasions of sin; and the body is less capable of being restrained in its appetites, when it has once tasted the pleasure of following them.

Thus it was that those executioners having abandoned themselves to the liberty they had taken in tormenting Christ, lost at last all the sentiments of humanity. They weary themselves without being able to be satisfied; and imitate at the same time the malice of devils, and the cruelty of the most savage beasts.

II. The *Jews* had accused Christ of having designed to make himself a king: but *Pilate* despised that accusation; because it was easy for him, by having him scourged as a slave, to render him so infamous as, very far from being able to pretend to the Royalty, he should even become incapable of the meanest employments in the republic. Nevertheless, that accusation, how chimerical soever it appeared, gave occasion to the soldiers to make our Lord suffer still new afflictions and reproaches, by exposing him as a mock king to the laughter of the populace.

They

They stript him therefore once more of his cloaths, covered him with an old piece of worn-out purple, made him a crown of long thorns twisted together, which they put upon his head, and lest it should fall off, they beat it down into his head with their sticks. They penetrated on every side; some entered in his forehead and temples, and came out at his eyes; others pricked the nerves, and pierced the veins from whence the blood gushed out in abundance, and caused him such sharp pains, that he could never have endured them without dying; had he not been supported by the divine power, which reserved him for the death of the cross: and those pains remained till our Saviour expired.

Let those who have at any time felt violent headaches, stop a moment to consider how sensible that pain was to our Saviour, among so many others which he endured. The very thought thereof makes one tremble; and yet what is the thought, in comparison to the pain itself?

III. Christ joined his tears to the blood he shed for us; and was still more sensible of our sins than of his thorns. That crown, however painful it was, afflicted him less than our ambition, and the disorderly affection which we have for the honours of this world, wherewith we crown ourselves with so much pride. Those divine tears mingled with blood, composed a precious balm, most efficacious for the cure of our interior wounds.

What appears most surprising to human understanding in this mystery is, that the infinite tenderness of the eternal Father could let his well-beloved Son endure so dreadful a torment: but as the same love which engaged the Son to be our victim; moved the Father to sacrifice him; that Father of mercies had much greater regard to our sins which had need of so great a remedy, than to the pains and ignominies which he beheld that innocent Lamb endure. Much less indeed was sufficient for saving us; but what was sufficient for our salvation, was not sufficient for his love.

What then must our obduracy be, if all that our Saviour has suffered, is not sufficient for making us love him with all our heart, and for obliging us to renounce sin, which has cost him so much blood and so many tears?

Those cruel executioners were not yet satisfied; they put a reed into his right hand, to serve him as a scepter, and to shew the vanity and weakness of his royalty: they made him suffer a great number of other affronts, whereof we shall speak hereafter.

IV. The holy Fathers bring several considerable reasons, why Christ was pleased to suffer a torment so cruel and so new. They say first, that because, according to the expression of the holy Scripture, *all flesh had corrupted its way*, Gen. vi. 12. and there was no part of our bodies, but what had contributed to sin; our Saviour resolved to satisfy for us in every part of his body. Thus his flesh having been torn by scourging, his nerves stretched out, and his bones dislocated upon the cross; it was requisite also that the head where all the senses are united, which is the seat of reason, judgment, counsel, consent, and resolution, should endure a punishment capable of tormenting all his senses at the same time, in order to expiate the evil which we had done by ours.

They say in the second place, that our Saviour intended to teach us thereby, that the thoughts, designs and intentions contrary to his law and doctrine, are the punishment of man; and that our mind finds in itself the thorns which torment it. This is the misfortune wherewith God threatens the sinner by his prophet: *behold I will hedge thy way with thorns, and will hedge it with a wall, and thou shalt not find thy paths*, Osee ii. 6.

Those thorns are nothing else but the troubles and afflictions which our corrupt inclinations diffuse over the paths which we follow. They render the way of salvation so difficult and dangerous to us, that we quit it every moment; or that, looking continually behind us, we never arrive at the term of our pilgrimage.

For by abandoning the sweet conduct of the divine law, in which every thing leads us to the peace of the soul, to the freedom of the mind, and to the love of our neighbour, we necessarily fall into trouble of conscience, hardness of heart, danger of ruining ourselves, and into many other disorders; which not being corrected by that infallible rule, hurry us from one sin to another, from abyss to abyss, and cause at last the eternal unhappiness of our souls.

These are the thorns which come out of their own heads, which are produced by the human mind, when it is separated from God, and which occasioned Christ such sensible pains. Let every one therefore reflect a little upon themselves, and consider the injury they do their own poor souls.

V. St. Cyprian, in his exposition of the creed, shews another cause of that torment. He says that our Lord by his infinite charity was pleased they should make him a crown of that which had been the punishment of the sin of our first father: the sin of Adam was disobedience, and thorns were his punishment. For he

was

was not only banished from the earthly paradise, the delights of which he could have tasted without labour, in obeying his Creator; but he was also constrained, with his whole posterity, to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and to cultivate the earth, which, instead of fruit, produced him every where thorns and briars.

We also find thorns daily on earth and in temporal goods, which do not correspond to the greatness of our labours; but much more still in the interior warfare which we suffer; in the revolt of the flesh against the spirit; and in the continual assaults of our enemies, which permit us not to enjoy the fruits of the Holy Ghost, which are peace, meekness, comfort, &c.

Our Saviour therefore was pleased, in order to render those thorns profitable to us, to be crowned with thorns himself; that they might draw from his sacred head a most divine fruitfulness; and being continually the punishment of sin, they might be a source of merits for us. For it is true that Christ has sanctified our pains by his: and that what was formerly our shame and punishment, is now become our glory and happiness. The revolts of the flesh against the spirit, which so often make the servants of God lament, are, by the virtue of our Saviour's sufferings, the occasion of their combats, and the matter of their triumphs.

But if they be in them the occasions of sin, the combat is more just, and the victory the more honourable; because the soul being able to spare itself the trouble of fighting against sin, by consenting to it at first, voluntarily deprives itself of the pleasure it would have had in committing it; in order to preserve the love of God, and to be faithful in the observation of his law: God esteems that fidelity so much, that he recompenses it with no less than eternal glory; which he would not do, if the labours and temptations of this life were nothing but mere chastisements: for the guilty, by suffering the punishment due to him, merits not in justice any sort of recompence. But the Son of God, being willing to make of this banishment, to which we were condemned in *Adam*, a glorious career for us, has taken from it the name of punishment, and given it that of combat: and he has also ennobled it himself by his example, and by the dignity of his person; so that he who suffers the most and best, obtains the finest crown.

Without that, God who is holy and just in all his works, in washing us by baptism from the stain of sin, would have also remitted us the punishment thereof. It would not have been consistent with his justice to punish us for a fault already pardoned; and Christ, who was born without sin, ought to have lived without sufferings.

sufferings. Yet we know he endured very great ones, that by the virtue of *his*, ours might become the price and merit of the heavenly kingdom. Therefore the greatest happiness that can betide us in our poverty is, to heap up great treasures of sufferings, for purchasing that crown of glory, to which our Saviour has given us a right to pretend by his crown of thorns.

VI. We ought therefore to be ashamed, as *St Bernard* says, to be delicate members under a head crowned with thorns. Christ, before he wore that crown, had his whole body torn by a cruel scourging; because members better treated did not belong to a head so oppressed with pain. Our Saviour is our head, and we are his members; it is not reasonable that we should live in delicacy, whilst he is under sufferings. If we are ashamed of imitating our head, he will also be ashamed of owning us for his members. There are some animals, which to preserve their head, expose all the rest of their body. Was it not fit that we should have been pierced with thorns, and that our head should have been free from them? But since by his infinite mercy, he vouchsafed to suffer that torment for us; how can we think on his being crowned with thorns, and abandon ourselves to corporeal pleasures?

Can the human mind be persuaded that Christ, with his eyes bathed in blood and tears, and his cheeks bruised and livid, his face disfigured, his head crowned with thorns, desires to be acknowledged by these marks for our Father, and that he will consider him at the same time as one of his children, whose whole life is spent in the search of pleasures, favour, and elevation, in a profound forgetfulness of his salvation, and of God's benefits? Can any one believe that this vigilant shepherd of our souls gives full power to his sheep to live in licentiousness and delights, and consents to see us crowned with roses, when he is crowned with thorns? He has taught us himself, that the servant ought not to be better treated than his master. Let him therefore that would walk securely, and not fall into the snare, regulate his conduct according to the examples and doctrine of the eternal wisdom.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ crowned with thorns.

I ADORE thee, O divine Jesus! as my true king; I acknowledge thee for my sovereign Lord, through all those wounds which thou hast received for healing me in. I adore thee amidst those reproaches, with which thou wast pleased to be covered, only that I might be clothed with glory. Was not the precious blood which flowed from thy whole body sufficient, O my Saviour! without shedding also that of thy sacred head? Could not *that* communicate its divine influences to me, without being tormented so cruelly? Thou wilt have that countenance, after which the angels sigh, be disfigured; and all the veins of thy body be opened, for healing the wounds of my soul.

I adore thee, O God of my heart! I adore the ineffable love, which reduced thee to that state: I give thee infinite thanks for so many mercies. Accomplish thy work, transpierce this heart with thy thorns, O my Jesus! let them come from thy sacred head all bathed in thy blood, and wholly burning with thy love, as inflamed arrows, in order to pierce me with their points, and inflame me with their fire.

II. May I acknowledge at last, O thou love of my soul! that whatever is not done for thee is lost. When will the moment come wherein I shall love thee with my whole heart, O my sovereign good! wherein I shall correspond to thy love with an entire fidelity, by giving myself to thee without reserve, and by consuming myself in thy service? To what purpose is this life, this soul, and all that is within me, to me, if they burn not with love for thee, who alone art worthy of my love?

Thou art like thyself in all things, always amiable, always liberal, always merciful, and always full of tenderness towards me, so far as to sacrifice thyself for my salvation. And as for me, I am also ever like myself, that is, always miserable, poor, tepid, obdurate, full of love for myself, and of indifferency for thee. O goodness! O mercy! O liberality! O source of infinite blessings! have mercy on me. *Cast me not away from thy face: and thy holy Spirit take not away from me.* Psal. l. 13.

III. The head is the part by which men are known, where the face is, where all the senses meet, as also the organs of life and conversation,

conversation, beauty and deformity; wherein appear joy and sorrow, boldness and fear, health and sickness, and all the sentiments of the soul. It is that part, O Lord! which thou sufferedst to be pierced with thorns, and stained with blood. It is by that, *O thou most beautiful among the children of men!* O amiable spouse of my soul! that thou wast pleased to be distinguished. Thou wouldst make me comprehend by those signs, what passes in thy heart, the love wherewith it burns, and the zeal it has for my salvation and perfection. Thou wilt have me acknowledge that thy greatest desire is to gain me to thyself by thy benefits and by the works of thy divine charity.

O how much more deeply does that blood which flows upon thy face, that head pierced with thorns, wound the hearts of those who are touched with thy love, than if it was brilliant and crowned with precious stones! The riches and crowns of the earth can give nothing but what they have, that is, earthly advantages: but thy pains and thorns fill the soul with heavenly sweetness, load it with spiritual riches, and fix it to thee by the bonds of a love which is above all imagination.

O King of Glory! O that I might never lose sight of thee, but follow thee always with the eyes and desires of my soul! for it is from that head crowned with thorns, that I receive my life, my repose, and my nourishment: it is in that mirror that I behold myself such as I am; and I lose myself when I cease to look upon it.

IV. They seek on earth for rich metals and precious stones, for making the crowns of kings; and thou, O King of Glory! hast chosen only thorns for thy crown; because thou wouldst enrich us all, by crowning us with a matter which is so common on earth; and by rendering those very thorns so precious, with the touch of thy sacred head, which had served in the punishment of the first man.

Thorns, which are a mark of sterility, become fruitful on thy head, O my Saviour! and produce us inestimable fruits of grace and glory. Thou takest my miseries upon thee, in order to alleviate them; and crownest thyself therewith, to render them glorious to me. Ought I to complain after this, when I am afflicted! Be for ever blessed, O Divine Love! who hast so disposed things for our good, that a true Christian cannot be poor, when he possesses great sufferings; and that he who is overwhelmed with miseries, is always full of riches.

V. Wretched

V. Wretched that I am! is not all this yet sufficient for making me love the cross, injuries, reproaches, and whatever renders me like thee, O thou God of my soul! I am terrified by sufferings when they come, am dejected whilst they continue, am glad when they terminate, and esteem myself happy when I am entirely delivered from them. Wilt thou never destroy, O my God! the weakness of my flesh by the force of thy love?

How contrary are the false advantages wherewith I flatter myself, and the real meannesses in which I glory, from what I behold in thee! How the vain esteem I have of myself, the pleasure I take in the praises of men, and all the smoke of this world remove me from thy divine communications. All my thoughts are terminated in the conveniencies of my body, in the support of my vanity, and in the pleasures of this life; and thereby, O my God! I lose all the fruit of thy thorns.

I am ashamed to see thee crowned with pain and ignominy, and am not ashamed to desire to rule, to do always my own will, and to seek nothing but sensual pleasures. When I do what I will, without finding any opposition thereto; when I follow my appetites with an entire liberty; when all the world honours me; and when every thing succeeds with me, I am content; I busy myself with a thousand vain projects; am pleased with myself; and am lost in my own thoughts; because I then forget how miserable and contemptible I am in thy eyes.

When shall I hate myself, O my God! as much as I am hateful? When shall I be ashamed of myself before thee? Thou art crowned with thorns, and I fly from every thing that incommodes me. Thou wearest a diadem of pain and ignominy, and I still love the vanities and pleasures of this world.

VI. How can I, in the midst of vanity and delights, be a member of that head crowned with thorns? *Turn away my eyes, O Lord! that they may not see vanity*; and that they may be fixed only on thee. Teach me to consider the state thou art in, and to be ashamed of the state in which I am. Thou seest the bottom of this miserable heart, root every thing out of it, by thy mercy, that displeases thee in it. Permit me not to love what separates me from thee. Teach me to know myself, and to judge myself according to what I see in thee; to condemn and punish myself as I deserve. Crown me with thy thorns, O my amiable Jesus! grant that my glory and crown may be to suffer with thee: for I cannot be united to thee, unless I be like thee.

VII. I here

VII. I here confess my misery before thee, O my Saviour! purpose every day to imitate thee; to desire to see in myself what I adore in thee; to say that I abandon myself entirely into thy hands; and yet when an occasion offers of being faithful to thee, I want courage, draw back, and retire from thy conduct, in order to follow my own desires. O Jesus, my only hope! who knowest the disorder and vanity of my heart, receive the desire which thou inspirest me with at this moment, of being wholly thine: grant that I may love thee, and hate myself; that I may imitate thee, and renounce myself.

Destroy in me every thing thou seeest contrary to thy will, in spite of all the resistance of my flesh. Use violence, if it be necessary; drag me, if I will not walk; force me forward, if I stop; afflict me, if I resist; and make me feel thy thorns, until I have learned to crown myself therewith, and to glory therein. Accomplish thy work, O my God! without hearkening to my weakness: thou canst fortify it, since thou art the fortitude of all those that hope in thee.

O most sacred Mother of God! perfect imitatrix of our Saviour; if you are oppressed with sorrow, if your Son is crowned with thorns, what shall become of me, me who am nothing but pride and delicacy? Assist me, O Refuge of sinners! obtain me the light I have need of for knowing the infinite love of Jesus, for following his examples, and for hating myself, and every thing that is capable of separating me from him. Obtain me the will and strength of suffering all the pains wherewith he shall please to afflict me: for I know that one cannot be without crosses and thorns; and that you will not acknowledge me for one of your servants, unless I wear the livery of your only Son. Blessed Spirits, ye who clearly see the value of our Saviour's thorns, and the misfortune of those who love the pleasures of this world; take pity on a blind and miserable sinner, who seeks, in a place of banishment, what is only to be found in the heavenly country. Obtain for me a ray of that light wherewith ye shine, that I may know that in order to be crowned one day with the glory amongst you in heaven, we must have been crowned with thorns on earth. *Amen.*

XL. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

He is mocked by the soldiers, and exposed to the laughter of the people.

THE *Jews* made Christ suffer all the affronts they could think of, whilst he was in their hands. And the soldiers after crowning him with thorns, and cloathing him with an old purple cloak, put a reed in his hand, instead of a scepter, as a mock king, and placed him afterwards in the midst of them. That crown was cruel, and that purple ignominious. They pretended, by those hands bound, to shew his weakness; and by that reed, to denote the vanity and inconstancy of his royalty. But the Holy Ghost, whose wisdom directed all that great mystery, had many other views: he designed to discover to us, through that train of ignominy, the pure light of his divine truths.

For that thread-bare and torn purple teaches us that there is nothing in Christ, how vile and contemptible soever it may appear to the eyes of men, but wherewith we may cover and defend ourselves against the corruption of the world, and against the rigour of God's justice. If the touch only of the hem of his garment cured a woman of a disorder which she had for twelve years; what will be the virtue of his purple in favour of those, who with faith and love shall be covered therewith? That crowns of thorns, however frightful and dreadful it be, did it not acquire him an infinite number of illustrious subjects, who were faithful to their king in the severest trials? and were not those fettered hands the support and defence of his soldiers, in the most dangerous combats? If he is shewn to us as the king of sinners and of criminals, it is to give us hopes, that being ourselves of that number, we shall one day be his courtiers and domestics in heaven.

In fine, there is no need of any other scepter than a reed, for him of whom *Isaiab* had foretold, that *the bruised reed he shall not break*, xliiii. 3. For though we be more weak, inconstant, and hollow than reeds, he by his goodness will supply all that we want, provided he holds us in his hand, and we remain under his conduct. Behold what we are taught by the faith which our Saviour has established in his church, and confirmed by all the reproaches which the *Jews* employed in vain for destroying his royalty.

II. Whilst

II. Whilst our Saviour was in this posture, the soldiers appointed to guard him, assembled about him, lest he should be taken away; and having made a great circle, they went off one after another, bowing their knees before him, and saying out of mockery; *Hail, King of the Jews!* They afterwards took the reed which he had in his hand, struck him over the head and face therewith, and thus renewed the pain of his thorns.

We can never comprehend the affronting words, immoderate laughter, and indecent gestures of that insolent mob, who treated the King of Glory, as the most foolish and last of all men. His tormentors were many, and every one endeavoured to exceed those that went before them. The affronts, the pricking of the thorns, the strokes they gave him on the head, the blows, and the spittings followed one another so closely, that there is reason to doubt whether that torment was not the greatest of all his passion; since what they made him suffer then, renewed all his preceding pains.

What is most surprizing is, that all sources of natural and human compassion were so dried up in those obdurate hearts, that the piteous state to which they had reduced our Saviour, could only excite them to a greater cruelty. But that Lamb of God was pleased to draw upon himself alone the whole rage of Satan, which we had deserved by our sins; and to reserve for us all the mercy which we had rendered ourselves unworthy of.

III. Thus it was that they despised the royalty of the Son of God, that his divine person was trampled under foot, that they considered him as a mock king, who by his power supports heaven and earth, and concealed his majesty only that he might be able to suffer for us. Love was more excessive in Christ, than hatred in his enemies; hatred urged them to find out new means of tormenting him, and love inflamed our Saviour with the desire of suffering, in order to merit eternal blessings for us by his sufferings. But at last hatred was dashed to pieces against *that rock*, and love prevailed: the royalty of Christ which the *Jews* esteemed false, triumphed over all their efforts, and will be regarded as *true* for all eternity.

Let those impious wretches do what they will; let them mock him as much as they please; they speak the truth, against their own wills, when they call Christ the *King of the Jews*. How wicked soever the intention of *Caiphas* was, faith considers as a divine truth the sentence he pronounced, when he said; *It is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and not that the whole nation perish*, John xi. 50. The Holy Ghost inspired him with these words for

for our instruction; but *Caiphas* pronounced them to destroy Christ. Thus it is that faith receives with submission and respect, what the Jews said only out of contempt; and whilst they make a jest of Christ, we say to him with *David*, in love and veneration: *Thou art the same, my King and my God; who commandest the salvation of Jacob*, Psal. xliii. 5. That is, the salvation of all thy servants: for the divine truth ceases not to be *such*, even when it is pronounced by an impious mouth.

IV. It is a great advantage to have God for our judge: for he whom God approves, cannot be condemned; whereas human approbation is a very weak help, when one is condemned by the secret judgments of God. If his servants, when they are despised by the world, apply themselves seriously to imitate the silence and meekness of that divine humbled king; if, content with pleasing him, they resign to God the judgment of their cause; he is so just and so faithful, that he will draw their grandeur out of their abjection, and will make what dishonours them become the source of their glory. Let them only cast themselves into his arms, without prescribing to him, either the time or measure of their resignation, being indifferent whether they be justified in this life or the other, allowing themselves to be conducted in all things by his providence, confiding in his goodness, and assuring themselves that he will come to their assistance, when it shall be profitable and glorious for him to succour them; and that in the mean time they shall not want the necessary graces for supporting the afflictions of this life meritoriously. Let them therefore be always diffident of themselves; but never diffident of God.

AN EXPOSITION of these Words: *Behold the Man.*

THE affronts which they made Christ endure, in derision of his royalty, ended not there. *Pilate* having called him from amidst that insolent crowd, and seeing the condition wherein they had put him, was at first seized with horror and astonishment: but afterwards reflecting that the cruelty which they had exercised already against our Saviour, might serve to deliver him from death, he resolved to shew him to the people, not doubting but the sight of

of so piteous an object would touch the hardest hearts with compassion. For that reason he said to them: *behold, I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in him*, John xix. 4. He therefore made him appear before the people, with that crown of thorns, and that old purple cloak, saying to them: *behold the man*; that is, behold him whom you accuse of designing to make himself a king; see the condition he is in, and how incapable he is of such an undertaking. *Behold the man* whom you accuse of seducing and stirring up the people to rebellion; can the people give any credit to him, after seeing him in this condition? What can be feared, or hoped from him?

Although Pilate's actions and words seemed full of good intentions; yet they were a great occasion of confusion to Christ, to be made use of in that manner as a spectacle to all the people, among whom were his enemies, his friends, and perhaps his blessed mother, who in all appearance had not seen him since at supper the day before. Who can express what the grief of the mother and the Son then was, in beholding one another? Yet our Saviour bore that grief with an abashment, modesty, patience, and meekness, which would have convinced minds, less prejudiced, of his innocence.

II. Devout persons here find a large fund of holy thoughts, and a most plentiful source of interior blessings; and we may very justly say these words of the canticle to them: *go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see king Solomon in the diadem, wherewith his mother hath crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart*, Cant. iii. 11. For the synagogue of the Jews, which is here called his Mother, because he descended from her bowels, put that diadem of thorns upon his head; but he forgetting the cruelty of that *unnatural mother*, received that crown with resistance. He even celebrated, with the joy of his heart, the day on which he redeemed our souls with his blood, in order to make them his spouses by the bond of an eternal charity; giving them for a dowry the kingdom of Heaven, laying open to them infinite treasures, and permitting them to take from thence without measure all the good things which they can desire. Thus these chaste spouses, being charmed with the love of their bridegroom, give themselves to him without reserve, and find such sweetness and riches in him, as no tongue can express, nor eye behold, nor the mind comprehend, and which love alone renders sensible.

III. These words, *behold the man*, pronounced by Pilate, with a design of delivering our Lord from death, are considered by many holy personages, as coming from the mouth of the eternal Father, who

who shewing to all men his only Son, reduced for them to that condition, said to them; *behold the man*. Behold him of whom I told you before: *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*, Matt. xvii. 5. *Behold the man*, in whom I give you a father, a friend, a companion, and a pastor. It is in him you shall find your nourishment, your way, your truth, and your life. In him I give you all that I have; and all that you can hope for. By him I will pardon you, receive you, and glorify you. Dilate thy heart, O sinful man! raise up thy hopes and desires. If I give thee this man who is my only Son, what can I refuse thee? If I spared not even my only Son, but delivered him for you all; how have I not also with him given you all things? Rom. viii. 32.

Consider *this man*, O sinner! and tell me afterwards why thou dost not love me, why thou dost not serve me, and what thou canst bring for an excuse, when I shall condemn thee. It were but just that being my creature, thou shouldst begin to love me, in order to gain my love by thine: but since thou seest thy negligence and weakness, look upon *this man*, and acknowledge in him all that I have done for thee. Is it possible, O sinful soul! that thou canst perish, having the Saviour whom I have given thee? Cast thyself into his arms, unite thyself closely to him, hear his words, follow his instructions, offer him to me with faith and love, in order to supply what is wanting on thy part; I will refuse thee nothing that shall be necessary for thee, whenever thou shalt ask it of me *with* and *by* him.

IV. Other saints consider these words, *behold the man*, as uttered by Christ himself, and addressed to all sinners. Behold the man, says he to us; look upon me, and ask me for what you desire. Give your desires what latitude you please; because it is for you that I am covered with wounds and bathed with tears. All these torments are yours: my blood, my person, my life, and my merits belong to you. *Come then to me all ye that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you*. Matt. xi. 28. Enter by these wounds into my heart, and draw plentifully from thence the good things you shall find therein. Look yourselves in this mirror; discover your malice therein; see the evils which it occasions me, and those which it ought to bring on yourselves. You can no longer say to me in your necessities what the sick man said at the pool, *I have no man*: for here I am; and since I am quite ready to assist you, do not fly from me.

What could I do for you, that I have not done? If you would still have me do something more, I will do it, though it were to expire upon the cross for you. Consider me from head to foot, and

and you will see there is nothing in me, but what is yours; and that I am wholly sacrificed for your salvation. What is there in the world that is more yours than I am, that teaches you the truth better, that loves you more tenderly, or that is more profitable to you than I am? In whom do you find a friendship more sincere, more strict, or more generous than in me? Why then do you despise me? Why do you abandon me to follow pleasure and sin? You keep me here, O man! take care you do not lose me; and that you do not lose yourself in losing me. For you will never find your security and salvation but in me alone.

V. Every sinner may also apply these words to himself and say to Christ: Lord, *behold the man*; behold the sinner for whom thou sufferest so many pains and ignominies: behold the man who is unfaithful to thee, and performs nothing of what he promises thee. *Behold the man, that hath not put God for his helper: but hath hoped in the multitude of his riches, and hath prevailed in his vanity*; and therefore I am so miserable before thee. Psal. li. 9, 10.

We may also very profitably make use of these words, in the presence of God, by accusing ourselves, by offering and consecrating ourselves to his love and service. For a good desire accompanied with perseverance, and often renewed in the sight of God, is most powerful for drawing down his mercy. We must therefore accustom ourselves to appear before him, with an interior view of our own meanness, and to turn those truths which we consider, to our own confusion, for it is the surest way for knowing God, and meriting his grace.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ concerning his Royalty.

THERE is then no longer amongst men any sentiment of compassion for thee, O my Saviour! What creature, even deprived of reason, could see a man in thy condition, without being seized with horror and pity? It seems that human hearts are hardened only against thee alone: they are not afraid to cover thy adorable face with spittle and blows; to treat thee as a fool and an imaginary king; to put a reed into thy hand instead of a scepter; and an old tattered garment about thy shoulders, instead of a royal robe; to adore thee out of mockery by kneeling before thee;

to insult thee by abusive words and actions; and to pluck the reed from thy hand which they had put therein; in order to strike thy head crowned with thorns therewith. They excite one another to torment thee, O my God! and thou remainest in silence, as if thou wert a worm of the earth, without resisting, or complaining, and burnest with the desire of suffering still more for me. O thou love of my soul! O life of my life! when will they cease to abuse thee? but when wilt thou thyself be satiated with reproaches and sufferings?

II. I adore thee, O divine Jesus! I praise thee, bless thee, and give thee a thousand thanks, for the love thou expressest to me, and for all the torments thou sufferest. Let those miserable wretches say and do whatever they will, thou wilt be no less the true King of Heaven and Earth; and in order to adore thee, I will make use of the same words which they employed to affront thee. Hail, O King of the Jews! hail, O King of Heaven and Earth! hail, O King of Souls! thou art my God, my Lord, and my King! there is properly none but thee to whom the name of king belongs; since thou alone governeest us by *pure laws, converting souls*. Thou alone governeest us with a most divine peace, love, and wisdom.

O that thy kingdom might come to me! that thou wouldst reign absolutely in my soul; that I could sincerely say with the prophet: *Psal. xxii. 1. Our Lord rules me, and nothing shall be wanting to me: in a place of pasture there he has placed me*, where I receive a most heavenly nourishment. *Upon the water of refectiion he has brought me up: he has converted my soul. He has conducted me upon the paths of justice, for his name's-sake. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will not fear evils: because thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff have comforted me. I find my safety in thy rod which governs me; and my consolation even in thy staff which chastises me. Thou hast prepared in my sight a table, against them that trouble me; and there it is that I receive strength for resisting them. Thou hast fatted my head with oil, which is the unction of thy grace: and my inebriating cup, how goodly is it. And thy mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and that I may dwell in the house of our Lord, unto length of days.* I will have no other king nor master but thee, O my Saviour! I desire none but thee alone. Most despised as thou art, I prefer thee to all the most powerful kings of the earth; and love thy reproaches infinitely better than all their glory.

III. But it is no less the effect of thy mercy, O my Lord and my King! to receive those that come to thee with a penitent heart,

than it is of thy justice to punish sinners who confess not their sins. I acknowledge mine, O my God! and prostrate at thy feet, I confess, in imploring thy clemency, that thou hast not a servant more worthy of chastisement, and more unworthy of pardon. I have a thousand times abandoned thee; I have withdrawn myself from thy service. *I have said, I will not obey*; I have basely engaged myself in the service of unworthy masters, such as pride, vanity, self-love, and sensual pleasures; and I have subjected myself to as many kings, or rather, to as many tyrants, as I have committed sins; I have followed their law, and despised thine. I have lost thee, O my Sovereign Happiness! I have forsaken thee, O Love of my soul! I have turned my back on thee, O my Jesus! to run after them.

Hitherto they have possessed my heart, and have established themselves therein in such a manner by a long habit, that they pretend to reign always in it. They keep me at a distance from thee, who art my true life: they make thy law seem to me hard, heavy, and insupportable; though I know, by my own experience, that it becomes sweet, light, and even delightful by the union of thy grace. They have reduced me to that state of poverty thou seest me in. They have weakened, dejected, and blinded me, and stripped me of all my goods; and what gives me the greatest pain, O my God! is the habitual state I am in of obeying them.

For though I see they seek my destruction, I find in myself so great an inclination to follow them, that I can scarcely resolve with myself to forsake them; they have so deeply possessed my senses and my powers, that I must maintain severe conflicts in order to overcome them, and I very often yield thereto. They put a veil before my eyes, that I may not be able to see the purity of thy law. They freeze my heart, to extinguish therein the fervour of thy love. They inspire me with a thousand disgusts, in order to make me find thy yoke heavy, and thy conversation wearisome. Take compassion on my misery, O thou only King of my heart! and banish all those tyrants. Take possession again of thy inheritance, and repair all its ruins. Shew thy light to those that go astray, and do not return to thee. Give me thy law, O Lord! and the grace of observing it.

IV. When shall I find myself possessed by thee, who alone art my true King and my liege Lord? When wilt thou come to reign in this soul, there to be obeyed without resistance? When shall I hate all those that have reigned in it in thy stead? I beg of thee by all the ignominies and pains which thou endurest, that thou wouldst reign alone in me for the future, that thou alone wouldst possess me, that

that thou mayest be served as the sovereign master of my soul. For what king is like thee? Thou art a king whose majesty attracts instead of repelling. Thy sceptre inspires more love than fear; and the reed which the *Jews* gave thee for a sceptre, agrees better with thee than *they* imagine; since it is written that thou strengthenest the bruised reed; and dost not accomplish to break it.

Thou art the strength of the weak, O my God! and those that would perish in other hands, are saved in thine. Thou art at the same time an omnipotent and most good king, and takest pleasure in doing good to those that put themselves into thy hands. Thou art not like the kings of the earth, whose favour always occasions jealousy. They cannot communicate themselves to many, because their bounty is limited, as well as their power; and by giving up themselves to some, they are necessarily wanting to others. But thou, O my God! canst give thyself wholly to all, and wholly to every one in particular. Thou takest care of every one of us, says *St. Augustin*, as if thou hadst but the care of one alone; and the care which thou takest of all in general, does not prejudice the care which thou takest of every one in particular. In communicating thyself, thou neither dividest thyself, nor lovest any thing of what thou hast, or of what thou art: thou canst love us all, and love every one of us infinitely.

He whom thou honourest with thy favour, and with thy secret communications, becomes humble, poor in spirit, meek; penitent, full of holy desires, and sparkling with love for thee; and in proportion as his love increases, his favour with thee is augmented. In thy house there is neither distinction of qualities; nor respect of persons. One is not noble, great, considered, cherished, nor agreeable in thy sight, but according to the love he bears thee; and it is the love alone that one has for thee, which regulates the places in thy kingdom.

V. When we begin to be united to thee by love, we become great, powerful, and in favour, we obtain whatever we desire; because after having bestowed thy favours on some, thou hast no fewer remaining for others. O that I loved thee with my whole heart! O that I sought thee with all my strength! O that I resigned myself to thee without reserve! But come rather to me thyself, O divine love! inflame me, and transform me into thee.

All that I can do, O my God! is to bless thy holy name, and to say with a holy prophet: *my soul, bless thou our Lord*, Psal. ciii. 1. *I will praise our Lord in my life: I will sing to my God as long as I shall be. Put not confidence in princes; in the sons of men, in whom*

there is no salvation. His spirit shall go forth, and he shall return into his earth: in that day all their cogitations shall perish, with the hopes of those that trust in them. Blessed is he whose helper is the God of Jacob, his hope is in the Lord his God; who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them. Who keepeth truth for ever, doth judgment for them that suffer wrong: giveth food to the hungry. Our Lord looseth the fettered: our Lord illuminateth the blind. Our Lord lifteth up the bruised, our Lord loveth the just. Our Lord keepeth strangers, the orphan and widow he will receive; and the ways of sinners he will destroy. Our Lord will reign for ever, thy God, O Sion! in generation and generation. Psal. cxlv. We serve him with an entire certainty that he will never fail us. We have nothing to fear, when we put our confidence in him, because he is infinitely good, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, and his reign shall never end.

I praise and adore thy empire, O my God! I submit thereto, and desire it. I offer thee all that I am, and all that I can do; dispose of me according to thy will. I rather chuse to be slighted in thy hands, than to be caressed by the world; receive me, O Lord! through thy mercy, conduct me, defend me, chastise me, comfort me, enrich me, impoverish me, and do with me what thou pleasest; but never permit me to cease from loving thee.

O Queen of angels! you who are full of the grace of our Lord, bestow a little of that plenitude upon this miserable sinner. I come to you, O Mother of mercy! that you may present me to your son, that he may receive me by your hands into the number of his servants, and that he may never suffer me to abandon his service. Saints of heaven, happy courtiers of that celestial king, who are united to him by the bonds of an eternal love, obtain that I may enter with you into the society of so sweet a servitude. For, alas! what shall become of me, if I enter not therein? Assist me, that in waiting for the possession of that happiness, I may here below be a faithful servant of that King of glory, whom ye behold, love, and adore for ever. *Amen.*

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ concerning these Words :

Behold the Man.

EXPECT thy Saviour, O my soul! he is going to be shewn to the people, that thou mayest see, and adore him. O my God and my King! who has put thee in that condition I see thee in? Thou art then thus exposed to the sight of thy friends and enemies, thy hands bound, cloathed with a robe of ignominy, crowned with thorns, bathed in blood, torn with wounds, thy hair tore off, thy face disfigured, a reed in thy hand; and *Pilate* deriding those who had accused thee of having aspired to the royalty, said; *behold the man*: behold the power of him whom ye call *King*: can such a man ever be a King?

How great was thy confusion at that time, O my Saviour! to see thyself in that condition, serving as a spectacle to all those who had a few days before admired thy works and thy doctrine. Deeply imprint in my heart, O divine Jesus! that piteous and ignominious figure; mollify my obduracy by thy presence; and grant that I may feel in myself what I behold in thee.

Fix my whole love on thyself, O my Saviour! since thou art treated thus only for testifying thine to me. Charm my soul by the beauty of that fire which shines through all thy reproaches, in that bleeding and torn body. In spite of thy silence, humility, and modesty, the sparks of that divine fire fly out on all sides: let them reach me, O Lord! let them burn and consume me entirely.

O sweet Jesus! the richest, the loveliest, *and the most beautiful of the children of men*; why dost thou appear in that condition, unless it be to inflame souls with thy love? Execute therefore thy designs on me, O my Hope and my Life! take away my soul; the more miserable and fixed to the earth it be, the more thou wilt shew the force and glory of thy love.

II. O Jesus afflicted, despised, and torn! I cast myself at thy feet, and will be wholly thine. Methinks thou openest upon me the eyes of thy mercy, and art ready to receive me. I should not have this desire, if thou didst not inspire me with it; and thou wouldst not inspire me therewith, if thou didst not intend to hearken thereto. It is for me thou appearest in so humbling a posture; it is for me thou sheddest that blood; all that I behold in thee is for me.

me. But, O Lord! cast also thy eyes upon thyself, consider thyself; and do for me what that blood, what those reproaches, and what those pains require of thee.

III. Stop here, O my soul! and consider that *Pilate* comprehends not the sense of those words he pronounces; he is but the organ thereof; the Eternal Father speaks by his mouth, and says to thee: *behold the man*, who is no less thy friend than my Son. As thy friend, he is like thee; and as my Son, he has received an infinite substance from me, and for that reason he loves thee with an infinite love. He is *my well-beloved Son*, I give him to thee, and I give him to thee in the condition thou beholdest him. What dost thou require more? What more can I do for thee? Receive him, hear him, love him, and endeavour to imitate him.

In him I give thee all the good things I possess. I give thee a remedy for all thy evils, a help in all thy necessities, a support in all thy pains, and a comfort in all thy griefs; the payment of all thy debts, a mediator for all thy requests; and because thou canst find in him all that I have, and all that is necessary for thee, I give him up entirely to thee, and my will is that he be wholly thine. Behold, O miserable man! how much I love thee, since for thy salvation, I spare not even my own Son. But see also what thou owest me; the only thing I require of thee is, that thou serve him, love him, and imitate him.

What shall I return thee, O eternal father! for that infinite charity? I know that for all those blessings thou requirest nothing but myself. What am I therefore, O Lord! to deserve thy consideration, and to oblige thee to heap thy favours upon me, after such great ingratitude? But since this treasure is a present of thy infinite love, I receive it from that paternal hand, and offer it to thee at the same time for the expiation of my offences.

Remember, O Eternal Father! that thou formerly complainedst by one of thy prophets, saying: *I sought of them a man that might interpose a hedge, and stand opposite against me for the land, that I might not destroy it; and I found not*, Ezech. xxii. 30. Behold the man, O Lord! behold this man according to thy own heart; and since he is the object of thy tenderness, look upon him, and receive me by him, and with him. I offer him to thee with all his blood, all his torments, and all his merits; and I consecrate myself for ever to thee with him and in him.

It is by him that thou wilt pardon me my sins, wilt fortify my weakness, wilt dissipate my darkness, wilt instruct my ignorance,

wilt

wilt heal my wounds, wilt warm my coldness, and wilt regain me to thy service. Suffer not then, O my God! this divine Saviour to be unprofitable to me: for without him I am lost; and it is in him alone I find my salvation and life.

Although his mouth be silent, I hear the voice of his blood; and the condition I see him in says clearly to me: *behold the man*. Yes, O Lord! methinks thou sayest to my soul: O soul, redeemed by my blood! do not complain with the paralytic, of having *no one, when the water is troubled, to put thee into the pond*; for here am I: I am that man whom thou seekest; and my whole blood is the pool wherein thou art to find thy remedy. Thou hast neither deserved nor desired it; and yet I have prepared it for thee. Whither then dost thou go, when thou fliest from me? what dost thou seek, when thou seekest not me? What dost thou love, when thou lovest not me? Where wilt thou find such friends as I? What father, what brother, will do for thee what I do? Consider that I have had more regard to thy salvation, honour, and advantage, than to my own honour and life. Come to me, beloved soul! and I will comfort thee, love thee, and heap upon thee all the delights of my love, and all the riches of my glory.

IV. Why did I not always love thee, why did I offend thee, and depart from thee, O thou true friend of my soul! Behold this unhappy man, who has despised thee, when thou gavest thyself to him; who has rejected thee; who has neither placed his hope nor love on thee; who has run after vanity; and who has loved what thou hatest; but all my miseries cannot deprive me of the confidence I have in thy mercies.

How can I distrust those bowels of charity? Can I want hope in thee, O my God! and see what thou sufferest for me? Behold the man for whom thou wast made man; behold the wretch for whom thou didst subject thyself to so many miseries. The love which made thee perform so many great things for me, is not exhausted: it is still as strong, as ardent, and as powerful as ever. I conjure thee by that same love, O thou God of my heart! to pardon me my past faults, to change me, and transform me into thyself.

I offer thee my soul, my body, my strength, my honour, my life, and all that I have received of thee. Do in regard of all these what the wounds wherewith thou art covered require of thee: for I am so miserable and blind, that I know not even what is proper for me, nor what I ought to beg of thee. Tell my soul therefore thyself, O sweet Jesus! how much thou lovest me, what thou hast done,

done, and suffered, and merited for me. The only thing that I can do is, to offer and resign myself to thee, O my God, my Saviour, and my love !

O most sacred Mother of God ! when you beheld your only Son treated so cruelly, with how sensible a sorrow were your bowels penetrated ! I entreat you by that sorrow, by all the torments of your well-beloved Son, obtain that I may never lose the remembrance thereof, that I may become a new man, and that I may be received into the number of his servants and of yours. Angels of heaven, and ye blessed souls, who are indebted to the love and blood of Christ for the merits that ye have acquired, and the glory ye possess ; take pity on a miserable sinner, who is banished from his true country, and destitute of all good : obtain me by your intercession the grace of corresponding to the ineffable bounties of him, who is my Saviour and yours. *Amen.*

XLI. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

In his Death ;

That is, from his Condemnation, till he expires upon the Cross.

The Sentence of Death pronounced against him.

PILATE was in hopes that no heart would have been so hard as to have required the death of Christ, after seeing him in so piteous a condition. But he did not consider that it is the nature of those who are actuated by mere malice, envy, and hatred, not to desist from what they have once desired, and even never to desire it more ardently than when they see themselves nearest obtaining it. Thus *Pilate*, designing, by a sight so worthy of compassion, to appease the fury of the *Jews*, provoked it still more ; and they believed that after having obtained of that weak judge the scourging of our Saviour, they could also procure his death.

It was therefore in vain for him to declare thrice that that man was innocent, and that he found in him no cause of condemnation : they all cried out with one voice ; *away with him, crucify him, crucify him.* This obstinacy appears surprising, and it is so indeed. But if we reflect upon the disposition of our own nature, we shall find that

we are taken from the same corrupt mass, and that we have in ourselves the same passions which we detest in the *Jews*. For it often happens that he who thinks he has entirely rooted out such a vice by penance, discovers again in himself the same inclination, when the same occasions offer, and finds himself excited to his first disorders with as much violence as if he had never bewailed them.

Those who have long lived in the habit of sin, know by their own experience, the truth of what I say. Though they often condemn themselves, either by some interior motion given them by God, or by a pious lesson, or an affecting sermon, or the advice of their friends, or the example of good people, or their own reasoning, and sometimes by the views of honour and interest; the love of sin, and the enchantment of a wicked habit gains over them by degrees so absolute an empire, that they proceed to such a length at last as to commit sin without remorse, and even so far as to think it lawful.

II. The malice of the *Jews* teaches us therefore what we are capable of, what the corruption of our nature is, how much we ought to fear ourselves, and to have recourse to the remedy which we procure from the example of Christ.

Pilate being unable to suffer any longer the cruelty and importunity of the *Jews*, said to them: *take ye him, and crucify him; for my part I find no cause in him.* They answered: *we have a law, and according to the law he ought to die; because he hath made himself the Son of God,* John xix. 6. Though *Pilate* was convinced on one hand of our Saviour's innocence; and on the other admired his silence, moderation, and patience amidst such cruel torments; yet he had not the power of taking him out of the hands of so many unjust accusers. But when he heard the name of the Son of God pronounced, he observed him more closely; he reflected upon his meekness and constancy; began to suspect that there was something perhaps more than human in that man, of whom he had heard so many wonders; and to be afraid he had sinned against heaven, in condemning him to be scourged. He therefore went back into the judgment-hall, in order to be more fully informed concerning our Saviour.

Ah! how important it is to scrutinize the motion of the soul, and to comprehend well what it loves, what it fears, and what it hopes for: for objects scarce ever appear such as they are in themselves; but such as they are represented by the disposition of those who

who regard them. Hence it is that an action, which being done with a pure intention, would be a virtue, becomes a sin, when the intention is bad; that the same work of piety which passes for hypocrisy in the mind of one man, is looked upon by another as a good example; and that the same honour which gives a pleasure to the friends of him that is honoured, is the cause of displeasure to those that envy him. Thus the miracles of Christ, which made him pass for a magician among his enemies, caused *Pilate* to fear lest there should be something divine in him.

III. He therefore interrogated him in private; and asked him from whence he was, whether he came from heaven with some divine power, or whether he was born on earth as an ordinary man. Our Saviour answering nothing to these questions, *Pilate* who would have saved him, was offended at his silence, and said to him: *speakest thou not to me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and that I have power to release thee?* As if he had meant: Why wilt thou not discover thyself to me, who am not one of thy enemies?

It is true that *Pilate* could have done justice, but did not. Jesus therefore answered him: *thou wouldst not have any power at all against me, unless it were given thee from above: therefore he who delivered me to thee, hath the greater sin.* If *Pilate* had had more light, he would have comprehended by that answer, that there was something above man in the person of Christ, who declared to him in so positive a manner, that that affair not only depended on the divine providence and eternal counsel; but also that he clearly knew the degree of malice which was in every sin. This was a fine occasion for *Pilate* of acquiring a greater knowledge of the truth, if he had said to our Saviour: I am very far from doing any thing against thee for the future; and am sincerely sorry for what I have already done, by exposing thee to be scourged.

But we must here observe, that Christ designed not to say by that answer; that because it was from the divine will and permission that he was condemned to death by *Pilate*, the sin of that judge was less than that of the *Jews*. For the divine permission neither increases nor diminishes the sin, the whole malice of which proceeds from the will of him that sins, though God knows how to draw from that evil already accomplished, a very great good for his own glory and the salvation of the elect. If *Pilate's* malice was less than that of the *Jews*, it is because he did not abandon our Saviour to them, but in order to deliver himself from their importunity; whereas they demanded his death out of the hatred and animosity wherewith

wherewith they were animated against him. The sin was great on both sides; but there was more weakness than malice in *Pilate*, and in the *Jews* more malice than weakness.

IV. These words of Christ; *thou wouldst not have any power at all against me, unless it were given thee from above*, contain great matter of consolation for the just that are in sufferings: for being persuaded by the light of faith, that nothing happens to them in this world, but what is the effect of the loving conduct of God towards them, they mind not the malice of men, or of devils, that torment them: they regard only the divine love which afflicts them for their good; receive with love his chastisements and trials; and humble themselves under his omnipotent hand with an entire acquiescence.

Pilate, after that answer which he had mis-understood, seeing Christ, amidst so many pains, had his mind in heaven, and referred all to the divine providence, judged that if he was not the Son of God, he was innocent at least of the crimes that were laid to his charge; and consequently that it was requisite to save his life. But when the *Jews* perceived that *Pilate* heard them with great indifferency, when they accused Christ of calling himself the Son of God, they had recourse to their first accusation. They cried out that he had designed to make himself a king, and threatened that judge with the emperor's anger. *If thou dost release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend*, said they to him.

Behold the stroke that sunk *Pilate's* courage: and it is still at this day the common rock on which all those split that are slaves to the favour of princes. They cannot bear that one should so much as hint to them the danger of a disgrace: and God often permits them to be destroyed by the same arm of flesh in which they trusted. For *Pilate*, by abandoning justice, in order to preserve *Cæsar's* favour, lost both at last.

V. Having therefore shewn Christ to the *Jews* from a balcony, he said to them out of mockery: *behold your King*. But they cried out immediately: *away with him, away with him, crucify him*. What, replies *Pilate*, continuing his raillery; *shall I crucify your King!* They answered; *we have no king but Cæsar*. They still to this day experience the consequences of that judgment, which they then pronounced against themselves: for after having rejected their true King, they were dispersed over the whole earth, odious, contemptible to the whole world, and subject to strange masters.

Pilate

Pilate seeing that he gained nothing upon them, and that the tumult of the people increased, called for water, and washed his hands, protesting that he had no share in the effusion of that innocent blood, and that he threw the whole crime thereof upon them. But these blind people answered all with one voice: *his blood be upon us and upon our children.*

There are here two reflections to be made upon ourselves: the first, that for justifying ourselves in the eyes of men, we often bring as frivolous excuses as those of *Pilate*, who thinks, by washing his hands, to exculpate himself from the unjust sentence he pronounced against Christ; for how many times have we thrown upon the devil, the weakness of the flesh, or the pressing occasion, the sin we committed by the free motion of our own will! But God, who knows the nature of our freedom, and the helps he has given us, will judge quite otherwise thereof.

The second reflection is, that as the evil appears lighter and of small consequence to us, when we are drawn thereto by pleasure or passion, so much the greater will it appear to us, when we must expiate it by penance. So true it is that we have no enemies more dangerous, nor judges more unjust, than ourselves, in what regards the accomplishment of our desires; since in order to follow them, we often engage ourselves in misfortunes, out of which all the power of man is not able to bring us. Thus the *Jews*, blinded by their hatred, thought it a small matter to take the blood of the Son of God upon themselves and upon their children. They bear it still to this day, by the blindness and obduracy of their hearts; and they will feel it hereafter in a much more terrible manner, by eternal damnation.

Pilate having delivered *Barabbas* at the desire of the *Jews*, abandoned our Saviour to their will; and a herald published, according to the custom, that by the emperor's orders, and in conformity to the *Roman* laws, *Jesus of Nazareth*, for having attempted to make himself king of the *Jews*, was condemned to die on a cross between two thieves, adjudged, for their thefts, to the same punishment. The enemies of our Saviour received that sentence with joy, and his friends were in a consternation thereat; whilst that innocent Lamb, in spite of the repugnancy of nature, and all the pain which so great an injustice occasioned him, offered his condemnation to the eternal Father for the salvation of men, and accepted also of death with a loving obedience.

That action was accompanied with as many different pains for Christ, as it contained circumstances; because he distinguished and felt

felt them all. He was sensible of the extreme ingratitude of that people, who had subjected themselves to a foreign yoke, and to perpetual banishment, by refusing to acknowledge him for their king; although he had come to secure to them an eternal liberty. He was sensible of the blindness of those who consented so readily, that the very blood which he shed for their salvation, should become the source of their ruin, and of the ruin of their children. He was sensible of the sorrow of his friends, of his disciples, and of his holy mother, who beheld him so unjustly condemned to death; and he suffered that condemnation, to shew us thereby, that we were dearer to him than his own life.

We must not here forget that we cannot consider with sufficient attention and acknowledgment, that this kind of death was not chosen by the judge, but required by the people: for the confused outcries of a whole populace, who demanded the death of Christ, represent the voice of our sins, which ascend to the tribunal of God, in order to demand of him the death of our Saviour, who took upon himself the sins of the world. This makes St. Paul say, that those who sin demand again the death of the Son of God, or to make use of his own words, *they crucify him again*; because they renew the cause of his death. *Heb. vi. 6.*

Therefore our Lord was pleased, since he died for all men, that his death should be demanded by all the people, as in the name of all sinners; that we might all acknowledge the share we have therein; might be ashamed of having provoked him so unworthily; might return to him with love; and might consecrate all the strength of our body and soul to his service. As that death was to be the source of our life, and the remission of our sins, Christ was pleased also that the kind of his death should be of our chusing; in order to assure us thereby, that we have found him ready to die for us, in the manner as we have desired; he will also be ready to make us live with him, when we shall desire it.

Behold the works of his infinite love, and the certain assurances that he will always grant us what we shall beg of him for our salvation; for he who has vouchsafed to suffer the cure for our evils, a death which we have chosen, would never send us either death, or the troubles of this life, if they did not contain the seed and merit of eternal life.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ having the sentence of death pronounced against him.

WHO can hear, without horror, that cruel sentence of death pronounced against thee, O thou true life of our souls! O the only hope of sinners. Can the human heart comprehend how men, seeing thee thus covered with wounds, and reproaches, instead of being touched with compassion, should require thy death, and cry out all with one voice, *away with him, away with him, crucify him!* Take him away from them, Pilate, take him from those savage beasts, that cannot bear his presence, and give him to me; I will receive him in my arms, will dress his wounds, and will adore and serve him. Come to me that desire thee, seek thee, and love thee, wholly disfigured as thou art. Enter into my soul, live in it, and grant that I may die for thee.

But pardon me, O my God! for I am more wicked than that people. They are unwilling to see thee, because they know thee not, nor believe in thee; and I who believe in thee, adore thee; and acknowledge thee for what thou art; how many times have I turned away my eyes, when thou presentedst thyself to me, to look upon what separated me from thee? Remedy this disorder, O Lord! that I may never lose sight of thee; that thou mayest always be the object of my looks, desires, and love. For if my interior eyes are continually fixed upon thee, my soul will find in thee a most celestial food, and the remedy of all its evils. It is in thee, O *my resurrection and my life!* that every thing that is dead in me, shall revive. It is in thee, O eternal mercy! that I shall be delivered from all my miseries. It is in thee, O my sovereign beatitude! that I shall be comforted in the duration of my banishment.

II. O eternal fire always burning, and art never consumed; how admirable are the inventions of thy love! even those for whom thou diedst, chuse the kind of death by which they make thee die. My sins were then present to the eternal Father, their cries were joined to the clamours of the *Jews*, and demanded justice against thee; because thou hadst taken my debts upon thee, and I could not satisfy for them but by thee. Thou didst so subject thyself to my will, and sacrifice thyself to my necessities, O immense charity! that thou hast left me the choice of my remedy. Thou hast suffered the death of the cross, because we required it; and thou wouldst

wouldst have submitted thyself to another kind of punishment, if we had desired it.

If thou hadst that complacency for such cruel desires, how readily wilt thou hear me, when I shall beg of thee the grace of loving and serving thee! O treasure of eternal goods! who givest thyself so liberally to me, and desirest so ardently that I should possess thee as my own good; come to me, I receive thee this day for my only and sovereign good. I abandon for thee, and return into thy hands all that is mine. In possessing thee alone, I am rich enough. Thou alone sufficest me, O my God! and thou alone canst satisfy all my desires.

III. Thou hast already more than satisfied for me, and art not content; but wilt accomplish the work of my redemption, by the death of the cross. Thou buyest me too dear, O my Saviour! thou hast already acquired me by justice, look upon me as thy slave, and never free me from the obligation I lie under of being wholly thine. Since I am thine by justice, I will also be thine by love. I rather chuse a corner in thy house, than all the abundance of the earth; but why do I say abundance? I see nothing therein but poverty, misery, and affliction of spirit; and no happiness but in being thine. O that I were engaged for ever in so sweet a servitude! that nothing could separate me from thee, O my God! Unhappy am I, if I depart from thee, and if I am wanting one single moment in the obedience I owe thee.

Were it not more advantageous for me not to live, than to live without thee? thou art my creator, and I am thy creature. Thou art my Lord, and I am the slave thou hast redeemed. Thou art my surety, and I am thy debtor. But my poverty is so great, that I can give thee nothing but myself. Receive, O Lord! this faithless servant, who returns to thee, and will never serve any other master but thee.

IV. Hear, O sinful soul! the voice of the herald. He proclaims that Jesus of *Nazareth* is condemned to die upon the cross between two thieves, as a malefactor and a mock king. Consider with what sorrow the sacred humanity received that cruel sentence. Lend an ear to the loud rejoicings of his enemies, whose desires are satisfied. Behold the ardour wherewith they urge the execution of the sentence; and in the midst of that tumult observe the silence, peace, and meekness of Jesus, who hears all, sees all, and suffers all without complaint, or giving any mark of impatience. O God of my soul! how can I see what I see, and hear what I hear? What! thou art treated as a mock king, O sovereign master of heaven and earth! thou art regarded as a perfidious person,
O thou

O thou faithful friend of our souls! Thou passest for the chief of thieves, O liberal source of all good things! and the author of life is judged worthy of death.

I am, O my God! what thou art accused of being; and I have the baseness to desire to live. Thou diest, and I am still breathing.

O inflexible obduracy of my heart! how can I resist that tenderness? Shall my misery never yield to so great a mercy? and shall my coldness always stand out against that immense charity? The guilty lives, and the innocent dies; and the master loses his life, in order to preserve that of his slave.

V. Discover to me the bottom of thy heart, O sweet Jesus! let me see what thy sentiments were, when thou hearest that cruel sentence pronounced against thee? Make my soul feel with what mildness, peace, and charity thou didst abandon thyself to the power of those who required thy death, and to whom it was also much more necessary than they imagined. O divine love, O pure love! why dost thou not consume me with thy flames? Why dost thou not subject me entirely to him who sacrifices himself for me?

I adore thee, O infinite love! O immense liberality! I adore thee, O heart of Jesus! principle of my life, source of my salvation, treasure of all the goods which I possess and expect! Give me light to know thee, charity to love thee, submission to obey thee; a detestation of my sins, which cause thee so much sorrow; the hatred of myself who am so contrary to thee; and grace to have from henceforth no other thought or desire but of pleasing thee; since thou art my glory, my sovereign good, and the center of my repose.

VI. But, alas, O Lord! what is *Pilate's* weakness? Against his conscience, against his own knowledge, and against the advice of his wife, who had been tormented in the night on his account: *he judged that their petition should be granted. And he released to them him, who upon the account of murder and sedition, had been committed to prison, for whom they petitioned; but delivered Jesus up to their will!* thus it is, that in regard of thee, O my God! no order is observed, their *perverse will* takes place of *reason*, and *hatred* that of *justice*; and without being guilty thou art delivered up to the discretion of thy enemies.

There is no greater disorder in the world, than when all depends on the will of a single man, and when that will happens to be irregular.

regular. Thine alone, O my God! is capable of maintaining that absolute empire without injustice; because it is always holy, wise, full of reason and equity. And nevertheless what passes for the greatest disorder in the universe, and for the cause of a multitude of evils, is made use of for destroying thee, and for depriving thee of a life, which is the most precious treasure under the heavens.

What ought my confusion here to be? and what can I say before thee, O Lord! in beholding that thou art delivered up for me to the unjust and cruel will of thy enemies, and that I refuse to resign myself to thine? In order to condemn thee to death, it is sufficient that thy enemies require it; and to make me acquiesce to the troubles which befall me, it is not sufficient that thou willest it. Those Jews are blind and wicked, and thou givest thyself up to their will. Thy will is the rule of all righteousness; and I make a difficulty of submitting myself thereto. O blindness of mind, O hardness of heart!

For what canst thou ordain concerning me, O Lord! but what is for thy glory and my good? Thou convertest into eternal sweetness the crosses I here endure for thee, and all my labours into a repose which nothing can disturb. The injuries that are done me serve only, through thy mercy, to augment my justice. My evils are changed into goodness; my temptations and desolations tend to a most sweet commerce with thee; death itself is no longer any thing to me but a passage to a happy life: yet I complain, I fly from thee, and am not content with that admirable order which thou hast established with so much wisdom and goodness, what advantage never I find therein. O earthly heart! O extreme ingratitude.

Change, O my God! this moment this disposition of my heart, so pernicious to me, and so unworthy of thee. I resign myself entirely to thy will; and in order to comfort myself in all the troubles that befall me, I desire no other reason than to know that thou hast ordained it. There it is that I fix and crucify myself; that thy will may be done, and not mine, now and for ever, in life and death, in time and eternity. *Amen.*

XLII. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

He carries his Cross.

AFTER sentence of death was pronounced against our Saviour, the *Jews* thought of nothing more than to have it speedily put in execution, that *Pilate* might not have time to reflect thereon, and revoke it. Those children of darkness imitated the conduct of the devil, their father: for as he knows by his own experience, what it is to offend God, and is persuaded that men would fly from sin more than from death, if they knew the deformity thereof; he conceals from them the frightfulness of sin, shewing them only the false sweetness that is found therein; and stuns them by the tumult and confusion of worldly affairs, lest they should give attention to the miseries in which they are engaged. Thus it is that the *Jews*, after having brought *Pilate* into their opinion, by their outcries and menaces, gave him no leisure to discover his fault, and repent thereof.

They had already prepared the cross, and had brought it immediately to *Pilate's* house, that our Saviour might also have the pain and confusion of carrying it upon his shoulders to the place of punishment. They placed soldiers in divers places, to prevent the people from attempting his delivery; and forgot nothing that might accelerate or secure the execution of their design, whilst Christ accomplishing the prediction of *Isaiab*, suffered himself *to be led to the slaughter as a lamb, without opening his mouth to complain*, *Isai. liii. 7.*

II. But that he might not be taken for another, and might be known by all, they stripped him of that old purple cloak wherewith they had covered him, and put on him again his own garment. As it was without seam, and not open before, they were obliged to put it over his head; which could not be done without difficulty, because it was entangled by the thorns; the crown of which was roughly moved, the pain of its sharp points renewed, and the blood began to trickle down afresh.

Christ wished no less than the *Jews*, that he might be seen loaded with his cross; desiring as well as they that he might be known in that state; that after having declared to us, that if we would be his disciples, we must bear our cross and follow him, none might be mistaken therein, nor excuse themselves on account of their ignorance, after having seen our Saviour himself at mid-day in his own cloaths.

cloaths, in the sight of all the people, carrying his cross through the most public streets of *Jerusalem*, from *Pilate's* house to *Calvary*. He was not ashamed of those reproaches, because his love rendered them precious to him; and he was pleased to suffer before all, what he suffered for all.

People reckon it an honour in the world to have a series of illustrious ancestors: they recount the great employments they have had, the noble actions they have done, the blows they have received, and the wounds wherewith they have been disfigured, in the service of their prince or country; because they regard those blemishes as proofs of their valour and fidelity; and esteem them without comparison, more glorious and advantageous than all the beauty and advantages of the body.

Thus Christ, who had declared to us in the gospel, that he will acknowledge none for his disciples but crucified men, has made such account of his own cross, that he would not take any other garment than his own to carry it in, lest it should be thought that he was ashamed of it; and to shew us at the same time the way which leads to true glory.

III. When all things were ready, our Saviour came out of *Pilate's* house, in the midst of a double rank of soldiers, that kept off the crowd; and at his coming out he found the cross which was appointed for him. This was the most infamous of all punishments: for being condemned thereto, it was necessary one should be a slave, or convicted of some most shameful crime; and he that was fastened thereto, was looked upon as the object of the public malediction. But the Son of God, who was soon to consecrate the cross by carrying it on his sacred shoulders, and sprinkling it with his blood, began then to render it venerable, and to acquire it that glory which it now has on earth, and will eternally have in heaven, which is since become the abode and true country of crucified men.

As Christ earnestly desired to unite at last under that standard all his elect, who were to attain to glory only by the cross; he viewed it with joy, embraced it with tenderness, and was not frightened by its bulk, although it was about fifteen feet long. He did not excuse himself on account of his little strength, already exhausted by the precious blood he had so abundantly spilt.

He considered his cross as a well-beloved spouse, as the refuge of his friends, as the star which was to conduct his elect amidst the rocks of this world, as the trophy of his glory, and the eternal monument of his infinite love: he united himself to it, and they

both became, as one may say, one and the same thing, not by the union of flesh as *Adam* and *Eve*, for producing children of wrath; but by a most spiritual union, for begetting children of grace. He fastened himself to it then, never to be separated from it but by death; he honoured it, and sanctified it in such a manner, that it is become, by the dignity to which our Saviour exalted it, the source of our hopes, and the object of our veneration.

IV. It was in these sentiments of esteem and love for the cross, that he suffered it to be laid upon his shoulders, and that he thus walked before us, as the head and model of the elect. And because there was no person, either in heaven, or on earth, of a more exalted dignity, and of greater merit, to whom he designed more good, or that had done more for him, than the most blessed virgin his mother, so he gave her the first rank under that standard. She followed him through the streets of *Jerusalem*; and whilst he carried that heavy cross upon his shoulders, she carried one in her heart, more painful than all those which the just have borne since the creation of the world, in order to teach all men,

First, that it is a favour and distinction to carry the cross after Christ.

Secondly, how remote, he who is without crosses, ought to think himself from those two models of perfection.

Thirdly, what the blindness of man is, who neither desires, nor even comprehends that happiness. All these things deserve to be strictly examined and considered at leisure; because they are as so many plentiful veins, from whence the faithful soul draws those infinite treasures of light, consolation, love, fortitude, and constancy, which our Saviour has acquired us by his blood, and which are open to every one.

V. But all the glory which he communicated to the cross, diminished not the pain nor ignominy which he suffered in carrying it. He had a lively feeling of its weight both within and without; and was still more oppressed by that of our sins, than by that of the cross. For he was at the same time charged with our necessities, obligations and reconciliation, which he interiorly treated about with his Father.

He walked in that condition towards mount *Calvary*, preceded by a herald, and two thieves that were to be crucified with him; surrounded with soldiers who continually ill-treated him; and at

tended by the priests, the doctors of the law, the *Pharisees*, and the chief of the *Jews*, who led him themselves, and never quitted him, till after seeing him expire.

VI. In the mean time Christ recollected the little strength he had remaining, that he might be able to carry to the place of punishment, the burthen wherewith he was loaded. He sweated, he lost breath, and all his wounds burst open again, by the great efforts he used. In fine, when he was gone out of the city, being no longer able, he yielded under the cross, and fell with his face on the ground. The soldiers who conducted him, loaded him with strokes, and said a thousand injurious things to him, to oblige him to get up again; but the *Jews* seeing he had not strength for it, and fearing he might happen to die before he was crucified, forced a man of *Cyrene*, called *Simon*, who was returning from the country, to help him to carry his cross unto *Calvary*.

There are some pious persons, who in meditating on this mystery, envy *Simon* of *Cyrene* the happiness of having carried our Saviour's cross. I blame not this sentiment; but I can say that they would render themselves much more agreeable to our Lord, by carrying their own cross with love, and a sincere desire of imitating him, than by wishing to have carried his. That *Simon* was but an imperfect figure of those who carry their cross after Christ; and if that charitable master vouchsafed afterwards to receive *Alexander* and *Rufus* into the number of his disciples, both *Simon's* sons, to recompense their father for the trouble he had taken against his will; what will he not do for those that shall receive the cross with submission, embrace it with love, and carry it with perseverance?

VII. There were also some devout women, who touched with compassion for seeing him suffer, and with sorrow in seeing themselves deprived of his divine instructions, followed him quite bathed in tears. And having at last made their way to him, that they might hear his last words, he turned towards them, and said, for their comfort: *daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep over yourselves, and over your children.*

He thereby foretold them the misfortunes, which so unjust and so cruel a death was to bring upon the *Jews*: for behold the days shall come, adds he, in which it shall be said: happy they that are barren, and the wombs that bare not, and the breasts that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, fall upon us: and to the hills, cover us. For if they do these things in the green wood, that is, in me who am the Tree of Life, who have preserved all the

the purity of innocence and virtue, and who bear nothing but fruits of grace and immortality, *what will be done in the dry*, which is barren, without grace and beauty, and which so much care and labour could not bring to produce any fruit? What shall become of the *Jews*, who, far from profiting by the blood which I have shed for their salvation, require the revenge thereof to fall upon them and upon their children? *Luke xxiii. 28.*

Our Saviour then thought, with an extreme sorrow, on all those who, obstinate in sin, neglect the remedy of his sufferings. And for that reason he exhorts those women, to weep rather over themselves, and over their children, than over him; that they might obtain by their tears, for the one and the other, the grace of profiting by his death.

Where is the man, who in so deplorable a state, could have thought on other things besides his own sorrows? Notwithstanding our Saviour is more taken up with our evils than his own, and seems to forget his torments, in order to think on our remedy.

Thus it was, that on the very day of his triumph, when he was going to *Jerusalem*, amidst the applauses of the whole people, he wept so bitterly over that unhappy city, foreseeing the miseries which the blindness of its inhabitants were to draw upon it, who were ignorant of the time of their visitation, and of the grace which was offered them. We were also present to his mind; and our necessities took up his thoughts and love in such a manner, that as he clearly saw the depth of our wounds, so his pains were nothing to him in comparison of our miseries.

VIII. This would be a proper place to speak of the cross, and of the happiness of those who bear it; but our Saviour's example instructs us much better therein than any words can do. I shall therefore only say, that the greatest grace which God grants to a christian in this life, is to give him the relish and wisdom of the cross, and to make him live and die upon the cross.

I know this truth is sublime, and that it cannot be comprehended in its whole extent, without a particular assistance of the divine light; but the means of obtaining that light, is to consider with a lively faith, that Christ made choice of that kind of death; that himself carried his cross upon his shoulders, which was till then unheard of; that he embraced it with love; that yielding under its weight, he mustered up what strength he had remaining, in order to support it to the last; that if he consented for another to relieve him, it was that he might breathe a moment, and not die before

he was fastened to it; that being solicited to come down from thence, he would expire upon it; and that he left it at last to his elect, as a precious inheritance.

Hence it is that crucified men, who are the most lively images of Jesus dying on the cross, are also the most agreeable to God. Which makes me say once more, that he who has not the sentiment of this so pure a truth in his heart, who is not interiorly persuaded that the greatest benefit which a soul can receive from the hand of God, is to be judged worthy of the reproaches of the cross: and that this favour is preferable to all the extraordinary gifts of the saints and contemplative persons; that such a one, I say, ought to look upon himself as blind, and to beg this admirable light continually of God. And if he is so happy as to obtain it, let him preserve an humble acknowledgment thereof all his life, consider it as an inestimable treasure, and embrace the tribulation as the surest pledge of eternal blessings.

Interior Dispositions of JESUS,

In regard of his Cross.

COME out of Pilate's house, O divine Jesus! my king, my head, and my love! Appear without; thou art going to find the cross, which thou hast so long desired: consecrate it, sanctify it, that it may be the refuge and glory of thy elect.

As soon as it appeared, our Saviour fixed his eyes and heart upon it, and said to it, not by his words, but by his sentiments, O amiable cross after which I have sighed my whole life! thou art the spouse that has been promised to me; and it was for obtaining thee that I have served thirty-three years. Thou art the dispensatrix of my goods, the trophy of my victories, and the glory and crown of my love. Now is the day on which we shall be intimately united, and whereon I shall become one and the same thing with thee: I shall esteem him that shall esteem thee; and shall think myself despised by every one that shall have thee in contempt.

II. Thou shalt be the glory of my servants. He that glories in thee, shall be honoured; and he that is ashamed of thee, shall fall

fall into infamy. Thou shalt receive me this day into thy arms, I shall sprinkle thee with my blood, and thou shalt become the mother of all nations. Thou shalt be ennobled by me, and I shall be known by thee. Come then, O my faithful companion! that I may embrace thee with all the tenderness of my heart, and lay thee upon my shoulders. Let us go together to *Calvary*, where I am to suffer death; that that place may become a source of life. Death which shall snatch my body from thy arms, shall not deprive thee of my heart; we will live and reign together for all eternity. Thou shalt form and train up a great number of children, which we shall assemble from all parts of the world. Thou shalt be the terror of hell, and the joy of heaven. Those that shall seek me, and be willing to follow me, shall take thee for their guide; and shall obtain by thee whatever they shall desire of me.

Interior Dispositions of MAN,

At the Sight of the Cross.

I REVERENCE thee, O precious Cross! consecrated by the embraces, and blood of Jesus my lord and my king. I regard thee as the standard of his armies, as the watch-tower of his elect, as the defence of his servants, and as the characteristic of his children. I reverence thee, O hidden wisdom! O light unknown to the world! the honour of those that follow thee, the safety of those that bear thee, the crown of those that embrace thee, the recompence of those that love thee, and the salvation of those that throw themselves into thy arms. To die in thee, is to live; and to live in thee, is to reign. He that loves thee is content; he that desires thee is at ease; and he that possesses thee is rich. I reverence thee, O tree of life! whose fruit is the solid food of God's children. I reverence thee, O scale always equal! in which alone is known the just worth, and the true value of all things.

II. Thou art the lively image of the divine love, and the faithfullest mirror of an unbounded goodness; thy height reaches into the heavens; thy foot penetrates to the center of the world, to the bottom of hearts, and to the very depth of hell; thy arms are extended to all parts of the universe; thou unitest all nations around thee, coverest all men with thy shadow, and art always ready

ready to receive and protect them. Thou fearest neither winds, storms, sword, nor fire; and thou desirest nothing but our hearts. The inscription thou bearest is a title of glory and royalty. Wholly burning with the love of him who consummates his sacrifice on thee, thou communicatest the same fire to all those that love thee, desire thee, and seek thee.

III. In thee is found salvation and life, victory over hell, the delights of heaven, the strength of the heart, the joy of the mind, the perfection of virtue, and the assurance of eternal blessings. Thou bringest back those who were gone astray, enlightenest the blind, instructest the ignorant, and teachest them the science of the saints. By thee sinners return into grace, the wisdom of the world is confounded, pride humbled, and humility crowned. Thou hast confirmed the apostles, consecrated the martyrs, supported the virgins, and sanctified all the just. Thou rejoicest the angels, defendest the church, fillest heaven, and at the dreadful day of the last judgment, thou shalt appear with Christ, for the glory of his elect, and the eternal confusion of his enemies.

IV. I embrace thee, O sacred Cross! consecrated by the sweat and blood of my Saviour. For the future, thou shalt be my refuge, my light, my knowledge, and all my wisdom. Abandon me not, never depart from me, although my flesh fears thee, and flies from thee. I am content it should feel thee, since it is naturally weak and sensible, provided it always bear thee.

Since the pains thou givest me are for my salvation; since my life is to die on thee, may I spend no moment thereof without thee. Fasten me therefore to the cross with thee, O my sweet Jesus! and let there be nothing in me but what is fastened thereto. Let thy fear fasten my flesh to it; let thy death fasten my heart to it; and let my mind, illuminated with thy admirable light, penetrate the depth of the mysteries, and of the wisdom of the cross.

V. What have I sought, what have I found, O divine cross! when I fled from thee? whatever endeavours I use to shun thee, I find thee always against my will; because I live in a place of banishment, and in a valley of tears. By avoiding thee on one side, I fall on the other into infinite other troubles, which grieve, disquiet, and disturb me; which discourage me, oppress me, and leave me no hope. If I leave thee, to seek the pleasures of the world, I lose my peace of heart, interior consolation, and celestial wisdom. The world divides me, tears me to pieces, and drags me after it. If I fly from thee, to follow the inclinations of the flesh,
I find

I find myself in a continual inconstancy and agitation. If I abandon thee to run after vanity, I remain empty, always desiring, and never content.

Notwithstanding the goods on which I depend, slip from me every moment: sometimes I lose health, sometimes honour, then riches, and friends at last. What I wish for never happens, or if it does, it is but of short duration. We cannot rely at all on our life, and death is accompanied with fears and torments; because every thing that surrounds us, stains our conscience; at every step we find a thousand displeasures; and there often remains to us, from so many unprofitable cares, nothing but bitter tears, and sorrow without consolation, and an irrecoverable ruin. Behold the danger in which I have been, O holy cross! for having fled, when thou presentedst thyself to me, and for not having embraced thee with my whole heart.

VI. Nevertheless, besides thy preparing an eternal crown for those whom thou detainest in suffering, in sadness, abjection, and resignation; thou purifiest their heart, pacifiest their conscience, sanctifiest their soul, enlightenest their mind, fortifiest their weakness, confirmest their faith, securest their hope, and perfectest their charity. When they seem dejected, they are supported, comforted, enriched and honoured by the very burthen which oppresses them.

By depriving them of earthly goods, thou givest them heavenly ones; by bereaving them of the friendship of men, thou fillest them with divine love; by robbing them of the honours of this world, thou makest them children of God; by covering them with reproaches, thou crownest them with glory; by abandoning them interiorly, thou communicatest a secret and divine power to them; and by separating them exteriorly from all creatures, thou unitest them to God in an ineffable manner.

Thou settest those free whom thou bindest: by loading them with chains, thou dischargest them from those of sin; and the more rigorous thou seemest, the sweeter thou art to him who loves thee. Happy is the soul that is never separated from thee, and that penetrates the depth of those truths which are hidden in thee.

VII. Thou wouldst have the children of God be unknown to the world, despised, proscribed, and persecuted. Thou wouldst have their lives be spent in tears, poverty, and misery, without favour, consideration, or support; and that they should be under the feet of all men; and thy greatest severities, in regard of them, are the tenderest

tenderest marks of thy love. Among all these rigours, thou makest them content, rich, and happy; they cannot live without thee, they die as soon as they abandon thee, and the love they bear thee, makes them abhor every thing the world loves.

Their greatest desire is, to see themselves dispossessed of all things. Earthly goods are to them an insupportable burthen. To embrace thee, and suffer on thee, is their most solid consolation. After having been in this life their faithful companion, thou wilt present thyself to them, on that terrible day of judgment, to honour, defend, comfort, and glorify them, and to confound their persecutors. O holy cross! light of heaven, sure refuge of the afflicted, receive me into thy arms; and may I be united by thee to him who redeemed me on thee.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ carrying his Cross.

IS it possible, O Lord! that thou shouldst not defend thyself from carrying so heavy a cross; being so exhausted as thou art, by the blood which thou hast already lost, by the torments thou hast suffered, and by the wounds wherewith thou wast mangled? Thou knowest that this burthen is above thy human strength, and thou submittest thereto without resistance, O God of goodness! nothing seems impossible to thy love.

The cries of the people, the cruelty of thy tormentors, the rage of the *Pharisees*, the affronts, the injurious words, the insults, and all thy evils are renewed; thy strength fails thee, thy wounds break open, sweat mingled with blood begins again to trickle down from all parts; and thou renewest thy love, thy obedience, and thy desire of suffering for me. May all creatures bless thee, glorify thee, adore thee, and love thee. Thou bearest, O my Saviour! upon that cross all the sins of the world; and this is what renders thy burthen so weighty.

II. Whilst thou walkest on earth, thy sighs penetrate the heavens. Thou softenest by the motions of thy heart, that of the eternal Father in favour of poor sinners; and openest them a way to glory, which had been unknown in the world till then. Thou
keepest

keepest a strict silence; but that silence is understood at a great distance, and invites all men to follow thee. There it chiefly is, that thou appearest the head and leader of all the just, and declarest war against the devil, the world, the flesh, and sin. There it is thou discoverest the secrets of thy love, and confirmest, by thy example, what thou hast so often taught us by thy words: *that he who takes not up his cross, and follows thee, is not worthy of thee.* Matt. x. 38.

Thou tookest thy cloaths again, gavest back the white garment which *Herod* had given thee, and the purple cloak wherewith they had covered thee in *Pilate's* house, that all might know thee under the cross which thou carriest. Thereby thou destroyest all the vain excuses of flesh and blood; thereby thou sanctifiest the tears, labours, and all the sufferings of thy servants. Thou enlightenest the minds, warmest the hearts, exposhest the illusions of the world, destroyest its maxims, explainest thy own, establishest thy truths, charmest souls, and associatest to the happiness of thy cross, all those who are afflicted, abandoned and persecuted for thy love.

III. O Jesus! my lord and my king, my hope, my wisdom, my true life, and my sovereign good! permit me not to be excluded from that society, where thy blessed Mother, next to thee, holds the first rank, and wherein all thy faithful friends have been received. For, alas! what shall become of me, if I enter not therein? And whither will the road I follow lead me, if I follow not that of the cross? Lead me along with thee, O Lord! or draw me after thee, that I may never lose sight either of thee or of thy cross. I desire to follow and imitate thee; and I chuse rather to be crucified with thee, than to enjoy all the pleasures of the world without thee.

I offer thee my body and soul, my heart and my mind. I resign myself entirely to thee; and all that I beg, is to share with thee in thy crosses and sufferings. Permit me not to have any other views or sentiments, nor ever to shun the cross which thou shalt give me, how heavy and severe soever it be. The cross has at all times been the portion of thy elect: those that have loved thee most, have been the most tormented. How then, wretched that I am, can I please thee, and be of the number of thy servants, if I follow not the cross, which is the standard about which thou assemblest all those that are thine!

IV. If after having loved thee with my whole heart, for many millions of years, and having spent so long a life in thy service, I should see thee come to labour only one hour with me, in order

to

to comfort me; should I not be too well recompensed, by that favour, for all that I have suffered? Now therefore, O my God! that I see thee oppressed with pains, covered with blood and wounds, laden with a heavy cross, to become my head and guide, to invite me to follow thee, by a much pleasanter way than that in which thou walkest; why am I not inflamed with a desire of suffering for thee? How can I find any thing too severe? Why do I not reckon all the moments as lost which I spend without suffering for thee?

My flesh, ever weak, sighs under the cross, and endeavours to discharge itself thereof; but cannot the spirit of sufferings, which thou hast merited for me by thine, O my Saviour! change this infirmity into courage, and this aversion into love? When shall I see myself afflicted with thee, O thou *most afflicted of all men*! When shall I be reduced for thee into that condition into which I see thee reduced for me, O thou true friend of my soul! When shall I take delight in the cross? When shall I place all my happiness and consolation in suffering much for thee?

V. Thou knowest, O thou only remedy of my evils! how much more safely I walk, how much nearer I am to thee, more innocent, and more faithful to thee, when the cross oppresses me, than when it forsakes me. Thus, though the flesh complains, have no regard to its complaints, O Lord! and spare it not. Afflict me, crucify me, only support my weakness, that I may be able to bear the crosses, with which thy paternal hand shall load me, and that I may never wish to be delivered from thence.

Thou, who numberest my steps, and observeest all my ways, O eternal Wisdom! knowest how far I go astray, when I walk in another road. I take evil for good, falsehood for truth, the motions of nature for those of grace. I approve what I ought to condemn; and esteem what I ought to despise. I have a heart dissipated, distracted, divided, wholly possessed by the world and myself, and, what I ought not to say, without melting in tears, always remote from thee. I lose thee, O my only and Sovereign Good! and am insensible of my loss; I offend thee, and am unconcerned. I blush to appear such as I am, and am ashamed to pass for one of thy servants; because I am an enemy to the cross.

VI. What shall I say, O my Jesus! I cast myself at thy feet. Thou seest the depth of my misery, and to what lengths I am capable of running, when I am not restrained by the bridle of tribulation and the cross. What I then do, is exactly what puts thee into the condition wherein I see thee. This is what thou now expiatest;

piatest; this is what afflicts and oppresses thee. How is it possible, O God of my soul! that I can live peaceably with sin which deprives thee of life? Take away my life, O Lord! this moment, that I may offend thee no more; or lay thy cross upon me, as a sovereign preservative against sin. If thou layest thy cross upon me, thou wilt give me strength and courage to bear it; thou wilt enlighten my mind, warm my heart, and make in my soul those happy changes, which are the wonderful effects of thy grace.

I therefore this day renounce all human consolation, and I consent, if thy glory requires it, that all things be turned into bitterness on my account; that my friends, parents, and every thing wherein I took pleasure in the world, may become my crosses; in order that I may have no other friend, no other father, and no other consolation but thee. How happy shall I be, if I can ever attain to this! How rich shall I be, when I shall have nothing but thee, O my God! If all men abandon me, if I become *the reproach of men and outcast of the people*, if I am crucified to the world, then it will be that I shall be able to say with truth, thou art my only love, my only joy, my only father, and my only happiness, *Psal. xxi. 7. Gal. vi. 14.*

VII. Whither goest thou, O life of my soul, dost thou not hear the voice of him that cries after thee, and cannot follow thee but at a distance? Wilt thou ascend, without me, unto *Calvary*? Give me thy cross to carry. Since thou vouchsafest to pass for the chief of malefactors, I am very proper to augment their number, and to enlarge thy retinue. Thou shalt have three instead of two, and shalt save two instead of one. If they will not put me to death with thee, I will remain fastened to thy cross; and if I die not there by the cruelty of the *Jews*, I shall die there by the violence of my love. Imprint in my heart, O divine Jesus! that sentiment of one of the lovers of thy cross, who was wont to say, that if after having served thee faithfully for the space of a hundred years, thou shouldst grant him the grace of suffering only one hour for thy love, he would think all his services too well rewarded. A truth little known, but most certain!

For my part, O Lord! who deserve nothing, and am an unprofitable servant, I beg of thy infinite goodness the grace not to spend any hour of my life, without some cross suffered for thy love; because I know it is what pleases thee, what is convenient for me, what destroys in me every thing that is contrary to thee; and that thou dost not refuse those whom thy love crucifies, the strength they have need of for bearing their cross. Arm me, therefore, O Lord! and crucify me as much as thou pleasest.

VIII. Happy

VIII. Happy *Cyrenean*, who art judged worthy of carrying our Saviour's cross, and of relieving him in a labour which oppresses him! thou obtainest without begging it what I cannot obtain by my tears. Ah! didst thou but know who he is whom thou relievest, and what the burthen is which thou carriest, thou couldst not suffer it to be taken from thee, and wouldst wish to be fastened to it instead of Jesus.

Is it possible, O Lord! that thou hast found no person, who from a sentiment of compassion would carry thy cross? There is none but thee, O Son of the living God! O faithful friend of our souls! that willingly bearest the cross for others. All that thou meritest by thy cross, thou meritest for us; and thou desirest no other recompence for it than our profit. All those that serve thee are thy hirelings, and how disinterested soever they be on their part, they always receive from thine the salary which thou promistest them. But why do I say, disinterested? the most generous of thy servants is he who seeks only to please thee, and to do thy will; and what greater interest can one have in heaven or on earth?

O God! the God of love, how rich and happy are those who follow thee in carrying their cross! The *Cyrenean* did not precede thee, he followed thee; because thou wilt always go first, that those who are crucified seeing thee before them, may be directed, enlightened, and animated by thy example. But a man who, treading thy steps, has thee always before his eyes, O Light of Heaven! what does he see? what does he love? what does he receive? and what does he enjoy? Be silent, my tongue, and thou my heart remain in deep attention. *Speak Lord! for thy servant hears.* Tell my heart what he sees, feels, and suffers, who follows thee, and looks upon thee continually. He carries love, and is carried by love: love is his way and his journey's end, his occupation and repose. May I love thee thus, O my God! and may I be consumed by the fire of thy love.

O Blessed Mother of God! you who have had so great a share in the cross and love of your son, obtain me of him the grace of loving him, and of suffering for him all my life. Angels of God, and ye blessed souls, who are as it were living stones, hewn and polished by the cross, for the structure and ornament of the heavenly *Jerusalem*; obtain that this same cross may render me worthy one day of filling a place among you. *Amen.*

XLIII. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

His Crucifixion.

WHEN our Saviour was arrived at the top of mount *Calvary*, where he was to consummate his sacrifice, and give us the most resplendent mark of his love, they did not so much as allow him time to breathe. They with great haste prepared every thing that was necessary for fixing him to the cross; first taking off his chains; then rudely pulling off his garment, which was already stuck to his wounds; and once again renewing all his pains. He always obeyed with meekness and readiness; because he considered his tormentors as the executors of his Eternal Father's orders; to teach us to preserve submission, and interior peace, in the most sensible and troublesome accidents of life. For when we receive injustices, violences, treacheries, and other troubles, as ordained by God, who sends us them by the ministers of his adorable will, we submit ourselves sincerely to them, how cruel soever they be; we never regard them as our enemies, and we are more concerned at the injury they do themselves, than at what we endure.

II. That most pure lamb being thus stripped, appeared so covered with blood, that his whole body seemed to be but one single wound. But whilst they were thus busied in preparing his cross, in seeking the nails and other instruments of his punishment, his mind was not at rest, his heart and eyes were lifted up to Heaven, shedding most bitter tears; he offered himself again to the Eternal Father, to be our victim; and *was heard for his reverence*, as the apostle says, and for his *prayers and supplications*, Heb. v. 7. For it is a sure means of pleasing God, and of obtaining the light and strength whereof we have need in our undertakings, to begin them by addressing ourselves interiorly to him, in order to offer them to him; because which way soever things turn, when they are done in God and with God, the success thereof cannot fail being happy.

This place is very proper for exciting lively sentiments of piety in the soul, that whilst the executioners make ready to crucify our Saviour, should cast itself in spirit at his feet, to bathe them with tears, and there to receive that precious dew of blood, which falls on every side. What grace, what light, what consolation would it find thereby!

III. When

III. When the executioners had made all things ready, they came to Christ, and presented him, at the solicitation of the *Jews*, wine mingled with gall and myrrh, instead of another liquor, which they used to make criminals drink, in order to diminish in them the sense of pain, and the fears of death. They gave others a drink for comforting them, and they gave our Saviour one for tormenting him.

It may here be doubted, which of the two is most surprising; whether the application of the *Jews* to invent every thing that could occasion Christ any new pain, or the care that Christ took in managing so that no part of him might be free from torment. But it must be owned however, that his charity still surpasses their hatred, and forgets nothing that can contribute to the perfection of his sacrifice. For his palate having been till then his only sense which had not suffered, it was tormented with gall, vinegar, and myrrh, the bitterness of which spread through his very bowels. That extent of our Saviour's love well deserves our correspondence thereto as far as we possibly can; and that we esteem as lost every thing in us that is not entirely devoted to his service.

IV. Afterwards they ordered him to lie upon the cross; he obeyed without resistance, extending himself upon that bed of pains, without any other pillow than the thorns wherewith he was crowned. He immediately lifted up his eyes to heaven; to open to us the gates thereof, which had been shut till then; and because he was at the same time the Priest that reconciled us, and the victim of our reconciliation, he offered himself for us upon the altar of the cross, with an earnest desire of saving all sinners. His arms were stretched out to invite them, embrace them, and present them to his Eternal Father.

It was there indeed, that he brought sinners to God, united heaven and earth, and made them both as one house, and as one society, whereof God is the Father and sovereign master. There never was, nor ever will be, a Priest more agreeable to God, an oblation more perfect, nor a victim more holy; since *he is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.*

V. Whilst Christ treated thus with his Father about the reconciliation of sinners, his executioners were not idle. It is said they first took his left hand, and pierced it with a large nail through the midst of the nerves; that it might the better support the weight of his body: but as the nerves were contracted by the violence of the pain, and the right hand being unable to extend itself to the hole they had made in the other arm of the cross, it was necessary to

draw it thereto with cords: they did the same afterwards to the feet; and our Saviour's whole body was thus dislocated. Nevertheless he was silent, and did not let slip the least complaint; shewing an invincible and more than human constancy, amongst such cruel torments; and on the same countenance, where grief was painted, were to be discovered his patience, resignation, love, and the other heroic dispositions of his soul.

VI. He teaches us by that silence, and constancy, in what manner we ought to carry our cross, that it may become for us a subject of merit, and a source of glory.

First, let him who perceives any cross approaching, receive it as from the hand of God, with an entire submission to his orders.

Secondly, let him refrain all kind of murmuring, and neither complain of the weight of his cross, nor of the injustice of those that crucify him: for those complaints are the voice of self-love, which always flies from suffering.

Thirdly, let him not amuse himself with enquiring whether what he is obliged to suffer be just or unjust; let his whole motive be, in being subject to God, in confiding in his goodness, and in adoring his permission. Let him make an altar of his cross, whereon he may immolate himself; and let him offer himself to endure every thing, as long, and in such a manner, as God shall please.

But because nature always looks upon him that torments it with a sentiment of aversion, the crucified man has a continual fight to maintain within himself, for preventing his heart from being embittered by hatred, or dejected by sorrow. He ought at that time to adhere to God, to receive in the spirit of submission and resignation, every thing that befalls him, to dilate his heart by faith, and a certain confidence; that *God will not suffer him to be tempted above what he is able*, 1 Cor. x. 13.

It will be also very profitable to have our interior eyes often fixed on heaven, the thoughts of which will alleviate what we suffer on earth: for according to the testimony of the apostle: *our tribulation which at present is momentary and light, worketh in us above measure an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we are contemplating not the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; but those which are not seen are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

VII. But

VII. But when they began to drag the cross, whereon our Saviour was nailed, to the hole in which it was to be set up; when they raised it up with cords; when they let it drop suddenly into that hole; and when they drove the wedges round about it with heavy mallets, who can comprehend what pains all these motions and shakings occasioned a body, whose nerves were stretched, and joints so dislocated, that he affirms by his prophet, that all his bones might be counted? *They have pierced my hands and my feet,* says he, *they have numbered all my bones,* Psal. xxi. 18.

Then it was his enemies were satisfied, and expressed their joy by great acclamations, whilst our Saviour, thus elevated between heaven and earth, laboured, as a powerful and charitable mediator, to reconcile us to his Father, and had his hands stretched out to receive us. He then began to accomplish the promise he had made us by these words: *If I be exalted from the earth, I will draw all things to myself.* For he drew heaven to himself, to give us the possession of it; God, to reconcile him to the world; the just, to inflame them with his love; and sinners, to save them by penance. *John xii. 32.*

VIII. Amidst all these torments, as if he had forgotten his own pains, that he might only think on our miseries, which he would remedy, he was not satisfied with addressing his Father, by the interior desires and motions of his soul; but breaking the silence he had so long kept, and raising his voice, he begged mercy of him with love and tears, not only for the executioners that had crucified him, but also for all those, who by their sins were the cause of his death: *Father, said he, forgive them, for they know not what they do,* Luke xxiii. 34. He thus excuses the voluntary blindness of sinners, though it be no less punishable than other sins. What love! what mercy! for the enormity of our crimes is clearly known to him; and he knows they cannot be expiated but by his death. But he considers our sins after two manners, according to the observation of St. Basil, as injuries against himself, and as evils to us: the first consideration provokes his wrath, the second excites his compassion, and this always prevails over the other, *Bas. in conf. exer. c. 4.*

It is true our sins crucified Christ, overwhelmed him with grief and torment, and offended his eternal Father; but because by debasing us, they made us miserable, he has more pity on us, than on himself; and without saying any thing for himself, he is wholly taken up with begging pardon for us, as for ignorant and blind wretches.

IX. They crucified two thieves with Christ, and he was placed between them, as if he had been the most guilty. He had not been ashamed during his life to converse and eat with sinners, neither was he ashamed at his death, to have them for companions in his punishment. That good shepherd being come to seek strayed sheep, and to give his life for saving them, would make us understand, that sinners had a greater share in his cross, than the just; and that though our first Father, being just and innocent, had found death in the tree of life, we should find, though we are sinners, true life in that tree of death, whereon our Saviour was fastened.

Thus it was not without a particular conduct of the spirit of God, that they fixed on the top of the cross over Christ's head, the title of his royalty, in the three tongues wherein were written all the secrets of the divine and human wisdom. That inscription greatly displeased the *Jews*, but *Pilate* would never permit them to change any thing of what he had written; in order that amidst so many ignominies, all the world might discover that he who suffered them, was truly the King of the *Jews*; that they should find in him, as in a most powerful and amiable prince, protection, life, riches, and all good things; and that when he had remitted sins, defended sinners, healed the sick, and raised up the dead, it was an effect of that infinite power, which he possessed in quality of the sovereign master of all creatures.

X. Among all these mysteries, we must not forget the sorrows of the most blessed Virgin: for though she saw not her well-beloved Son when nailing to the cross, she heard the noise of the hammers which drove the nails into his hands and feet; and that gave so many mortal wounds to the heart of that afflicted Mother. But when they came to elevate the cross, and when she beheld her Son in that condition, who can comprehend what her sorrow was? It is sufficient to mention that it was equal to her love. Then being no longer able to retain the transports of both, she made her way through the crowd, and placed herself at the foot of the cross, as we shall declare more fully afterwards: but because these circumstances of our Saviour's Passion, which we have shewn in few words, deserve to be considered at leisure, and are most proper to excite our love and gratitude, we shall make several contemplations thereon.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ when he was stripped of his cloaths, before they crucified him.

CONSIDER, O my soul! with what eagerness the *Jews* prepare every thing that is necessary for crucifying our Saviour; hearken to their shouts; see with what haste they pull off his garment already cleaving to his wounds; observe that sacred body all bleeding and torn; enter into his heart, thou wilt find it wholly taken up with thy miseries, and fixed on heaven, there treating about thy reconciliation. Approach to him, and prostrate at his feet, embrace them and say: permit me, O Jesus, my Saviour, and my love! to embrace thy sacred feet. I will fix my heart to them, before they are nailed to the cross; and be consumed with thy love, before death takes thee out of my sight. Embrace with those divine hands, before they are pierced with nails, this sinful soul, for which thou endurest such dreadful torments; destroy its malice; warm its tepidity; and unite it interiorly to thee, in such a manner that it may never be separated from thence.

II. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world! receive the weak testimonies of my love; and that it may be agreeable to thee, purify it from all terrestrial affection. Cast, O Lord! upon thy miserable creature, the eyes of thy mercy, and cast me not away from thy sight. Receive my embraces, which I wish might be accompanied with the fervour of all those that love thee. Wash away with thy precious blood every thing that can offend thy infinite purity, that from henceforth there may be nothing in me that can separate me from thee. How happy would he be, that should find himself under the shadow of thy wings, sheltered from the dangers of this world; that should be sure of pleasing thee, and of being loved by thee! could he be esteemed poor, though he even wanted every thing else? Ought he to pass for a miserable wretch, though he should be oppressed with all the evils of this life?

Grant, O Lord! that I may burn with thy love, and then I consent with all my heart to see myself unknown, abandoned, despised, proscribed by all creatures, and content with possessing nothing but thee alone. Discover only to my soul the goodness of thy heart; may I be inflamed with the same love wherewith it burns; may those bitter tears which flow from thy eyes fall upon me,

me, may they wash me; warm me, consume me, and transform me into thee.

III. O my Saviour and only hope! without whom I am nothing but poverty and misery. Is it possible that I should see the ardor and eagerness of those that crucify thee, and still remain as slothful and negligent as I was before? Ah Lord! before they elevate thy cross, and take thee out of my arms, heal thou the wounds of my soul; they are still greater than those of thy body. Thou art my physician and my remedy. I cannot find in any but thee alone the helps that are necessary for me; and since my sins have put thee in that condition, thou knowest them much better than I do myself. For, alas, I am so blind, that I see them not; so stupid, that I am insensible of them; and so proud, that I have a difficulty in confessing them before thee, though they be perfectly known to thee.

Have mercy on me, O Lord! pardon me through thy mercy, the evil thou seest in me, and grant that among so many pains which thou sufferest for my cure, I may not remain without a remedy: *if thou wilt thou canst heal me* at present. I am sorry for having offended thee, and I would rather chuse to die than to offend thee again. Wound my heart with so lively a sorrow for my sins, that I may hate and abhor myself. Kindle thy love in me, destroy whatever may separate me from thee, that I may never offend thee more, and that I may live no longer but for thee.

IV. O Jesus, my hope, and my life! since the excess of thy love induces thee to suffer so many pains, to shed even the last drop of thy blood, to suffer thyself to be nailed to the cross, and die thereon for me; how canst thou at this moment refuse me the pardon of my sins, the hatred of myself, the strength of overcoming myself, the grace of loving thee, and never to offend thee?

I know that thy love is infinitely liberal; that thou hast a greater desire to grant me these favours, than I have to obtain them; that thou even sufferest death to merit them for me; and that if I obtain them not, it is in me that thou findest the reasons for refusing me them.

I acknowledge, O my only and supreme good! that thou lovest to communicate thyself, and that what stops thy divine communications, proceeds only from myself. Remove O Lord! all these obstacles; destroy the wall which separates me from thee. Prostrate at thy sacred feet, I beg this grace of thee with all the powers of my soul.

V. I am

V. I am blind and ignorant, illuminate me, O divine light! grant that I may see myself such as I am; that I may know what hinders me from being thine; and that I may hate every thing that displeases thee. This change must be thy work; and thy mercy is infinite. Though I have not all the dispositions thou desirest; though I offer not myself to thee in the full extent of my heart, thou canst supply what is wanting: because it is for that purpose thou art my Redeemer; and thou sheddest thy precious blood so abundantly, only to supply my indigence.

If thou abandonest me, O my God! who can assist me? If thou wastest me not thyself, who shall be able to blot out my sins? they are the source of my blindness; they occasion me all the evils thou beholdest, and which thou alone canst remedy. Look with pity on thy poor creature; pardon me, instruct me, heal me, and raise me up again. Pluck from my heart all that sin has placed therein, that I may possess thee with a pure heart, to be crucified with thee, to be wholly thine, and to regard thee as my only and supreme happiness.

VI. But whence comes it, O master of eternal truth! that thou wilt be crucified naked, and die naked on the cross? why dost thou not retain at least that seamless coat, which was wrought by the hands of thy blessed Mother? Ah! thou wilt retain nothing earthly, O divine Jesus! and because that coat is composed of an earthly matter, it is heavy upon thee, and incommodes thee. Thou camest naked into the world, and wilt go out of it in the same manner. Thou waigest not, as other men do, till death strips thee: for thou preventest him, forsakest all things; partest with every thing before he comes; and restorest to the earth what belongs to it, that thou mayest die in that perfect disengagement which thou hadst taught us.

Thou wilt have nothing worldly but the cross, torments, ignominies, and death. Thou chusest every thing for thyself that others abhor, takest thy delight therein, placest thy glory in them, and wilt finish thy life therewith. By that nakedness it is thou reconcilest us to thy Father, concludest the peace between God and men, openest heaven to us, satisfiest for our sins, and teachest us the secrets of thy admirable doctrine. By that nakedness thou triumphest over death, hell, sin, and the world; discoverest to us the perfection of thy love, and heapest blessings upon us. For, though thou art naked, thou art not the poorer; cease not to be what thou art; and possessest no less the treasures of eternal riches.

VII. Teach

VII. Teach me, O Heavenly Master! to possess all things, by forsaking all things. And because I cannot penetrate this truth without thy help, wash my eyes with thy blood, that I may clearly see the sublimity of thy wisdom, and the perfection of thy love. Thou art so rich, O Son of the Living God! that thou canst satisfy all the desires of my soul. Thou art so great, that thou canst fill its whole capaciousness; so sweet, that thou canst charm all its powers; so pure, that thou canst wash away all its stains; so amiable, that thou canst gain all its affections; so ardent and so full of love, that thou canst consume it and transform it into thyself. Ought we to wonder after all this, if thou wouldst reign alone therein, if thou wouldst have it void of all creatures, and if thou canst not suffer in it the mixture of any other love? Seeing thou alone art capable of filling it, how can it in possessing thee, receive any thing else with thee?

Thou knowest, O Lord! that the soul accommodates itself proportionably to the things it loves; if it loves nothing but the earth and the small goods that are to be found thereon, how shall it be capable of possessing an Infinite Majesty? Whereas in receiving thee, it increases, it extends and dilates itself; because it is proportioned to thy greatness; is filled and satiated with thee, who art the Life and Sovereign Felicity of souls.

VIII. When shall I see myself separated by thy love, from every thing the world loves, O sweet Saviour of my soul! When wilt thou grant me the grace to receive me into the number of thy faithful servants, and to possess me entirely? What shall I lose, O Lord! in forsaking all creatures, though they were even all united against me? provided I be thine, and thou mine, shall I not be rich enough? Separate my heart from every thing that is without thee, and make not this separation according to my views and desires, but according to thy wisdom and will. How rich is he who thus possesses thee, O my God! How happy is he who loves thee so! When I see thee stript of all things for my sake, I find myself excited with the desire of quitting all for thee, and of living at least in a perfect disengagement of heart.

All thy most faithful friends have followed thee by the way of nakedness. As soon as St. *Augustin* felt the sweetness of thy love, the cares of the world became insupportable to him. Thy apostle St. *Bartholomew* imitated thee so far as to part with his very skin, by suffering himself to be flead alive for thee. Some have retired into the deserts; others have yielded up their bodies to the most cruel torments: and those who were obliged to live in the world, *used it,*

as if they used it not; because one cannot truly love thee, and consider thee naked on the cross, without earnestly desiring, for love of thee, to be entirely like thee.

IX. Behold, O my Saviour! what the works of thy love are, O denuding love! O transforming love! thou art rich and poor at the same time; thou art weak and powerful; hidden and manifested; free and chained; overcome and triumphant. There is none but thou, O Lord! that can discover to and make my soul feel such admirable secrets; because they are fully known to none but thee alone. May the same love which operates these wonders in thee, operate at present in me that nakedness and resignation, that separation and union: an entire separation from creatures, and an intimate union with thee. May it separate me from myself, and make me forget every thing that separates me from thee.

But can there be no exchange made? Could I not be crucified in thy stead, O my God! and save thy life by my death? This question is perhaps too bold; but it is thy love which inspires me therewith. If that cannot be done, go then, O my Jesus! to the cross which thou hast so long desired; but fasten at least my heart thereto with thee; separate me from every thing else; and consume me with thy love: for thou art my glory, my hope, my treasure and repose.

O most holy Virgin! you who love our Saviour more purely, than any other has ever done; obtain me a share of what you experience in yourself concerning the purity of love. Ye saints of Heaven, who live only by love, drop down upon me a spark of that fire wherewith ye burn, that it may consume in me all the impurity of earthly affections, and that I may become like you the prey of divine love. *Amen.*

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ, whilst he is nailed to the Cross.

BEHOLD the cross prepared, O my soul! behold the altar whereon that divine Lamb is going to be sacrificed! Why, O my Jesus! wilt thou suffer so ignominious a torment? Thou hast already consecrated the cross, by carrying it on thy shoulders; it is thereby become sweet, honourable, and salutary to all sinners.

Stop

Stop there, O Lord! thou hast suffered enough. Let me be fastened to the cross for thee, let me die thereon, and let thyself live. Command so as a judge, and let me suffer so as a sinner. Cease suffering for me, and let me begin to suffer for thee; since that torment is more proper for me than for thee. Or if thy love opposes it; if it envies me the happiness of dying on the cross, grant that I may know thee thereon, love thee thereon, and possess thee thereon.

Consider, O my soul! with what cruelty they nail Jesus to the cross, with what meekness and submission he stretches himself thereon. See how they draw his arms, how they drive great nails into his hands and feet, through the nerves, which are such sensible parts. Feel, if thou canst, his pains; or if thou canst not, desire at least to feel them; and beseech Christ to imprint in thy heart what he feels in his sacred body. Soften, O my God! the hardness of my heart, that thy nails may penetrate it, that it may become sensible of thy pains, of thy love, and of the hatred of sin, which has brought thee to that condition. Refuse not, O Lord! what I beg of thee; for I cannot feel thy pains, unless thou thyself by thy mercy givest me the feeling thereof.

II. Jesus lays himself upon the cross to be nailed thereto; he stretches out his arms and feet thereon; lifts up his eyes to heaven; and, without word or voice, solicits the justice of his Eternal Father by the tenderest motions of his heart, by offering himself to be our victim. *Father*, says he, *the hour is come, glorify thy Son*, John xvii. 1. accept my obedience, and receive the sacrifice I offer to thee for the salvation of all men. Pardon sinners for whom I satisfy; kindle in all hearts the fire of thy love; bring back strayed souls; and extend the glory of thy name. Grant to the world, not what it deserves, but what I beg of thee for it. Suppress thy anger; open the treasures of thy mercy. Let not thy grace be wanting to any one, since I offer my blood, my body, and my life to thee for all.

Look upon this heart, O Father! totally burning with the zeal of thy glory, and with the desire of dying for men: though they be unworthy of thy goodness, I deserve, O Lord! that thou shouldst draw them all into these arms, which I stretch out for receiving them. Come therefore to me, all ye that are criminal, and I will pardon you. Come to me all ye that are afflicted, and I will comfort you. Come to me all ye that have gone astray, and I will receive

receive you. *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls.* Matt. xi. 29.

III. O divine Jesus! charitable shepherd of this strayed soul, behold me here: receive me into thy arms, since thou desirest I should throw myself therein. Give me that love, that meekness, and that humility, to which thou inviteest me. Subject my heart entirely to thy will. Imprint in my soul those divine virtues, which thou wishest I would imitate, that I may follow thee closely, and never depart from thee. I have been too long deaf to thy voice, which urges me interiorly to come to thee. Open my ears this day, that I may hear and follow thee.

Thou canst not express a greater love to me, than to suffer thyself to be thus nailed to the cross, and to die thereon for me. Refuse me not therefore, O Saviour of my soul! the fruit of thy pains. Give me those things for which thou callest me. Bestow thy spirit upon me: receive me into favour; but restrain me continually by thy omnipotent hand: for thou knowest with what facility I forsake thee. Thou seest all the reasons I have to be afraid of myself, and to confide in none but thee alone. I therefore obey thy voice, O charitable shepherd! behold here a strayed sheep returning to the fold, receive it once again, and grant that it may never abandon so amiable a conduct.

IV. The shame and weight of my crimes hinder me from lifting up my eyes to thee, O eternal Father! the miseries of my soul are known to thee. Thy wrath is great; but it is just; since I have reduced thy only Son to that condition wherein I behold him. If thou examinest my sins with rigour, I can expect no favour. Cast thy eyes therefore upon this divine Lamb that is going to be immolated for my cure upon the altar of the cross. It is thy Son, who has fully accomplished thy will in all things, and is inflamed with thy love. Thou hast given him to me for a master and model; thou hast commanded me to come to him, to hear him, to follow him, and to receive from him all the blessings I shall stand in need of. When I present myself with him before thee, thou canst not reject me; because he is always agreeable to thee, and is the way by which thou requirest me to come to thee. I offer him therefore this day to thee in sacrifice, and offer to thee with him all my sins and miseries. By him thou wilt grant me mercy, wilt pardon me my faults, wilt inspire me with thy love, and with a sincere sorrow for having offended thee.

Remember that he himself has told us, that thou wilt *give a good spirit to those that ask thee*, Luke xi. 13. I beg, O Lord! that divine spirit

spirit of thee; and though I be unworthy by myself of obtaining it, the sacrifice I offer thee, abundantly supplies my unworthiness. Give me the spirit of love, the spirit of humility, the spirit of mortification, the spirit of sacrifice, the spirit of resignation to thy will, the spirit of understanding for comprehending the doctrine of thy Son, and the spirit of fidelity for following his examples. May his spirit live in me; and may it be for the future the principle of all my motions. May I adhere to it, delight in it, and follow it. Shut the entrance of my heart and the doors of my senses to every other spirit, that the spirit of Jesus may reign alone in me, love thee in me, serve thee, and possess thee in me.

V. Thou wilt then, O Saviour of my soul! be nailed to that cross; but would not those sacred feet be more profitably employed in going over the earth, to convert so many nations which know thee not? Would not those divine hands be put to a better use in enlightening the blind, healing the sick, raising up the dead, and assisting the whole universe? Is it possible, O Lord! that thou shouldst abandon those divine exercises, to be nailed to a cross; and that thou shouldst be willing to lose a life so necessary to the world?

I adore thee, O Heavenly Master! and I will eternally bless thee for those admirable means thou makest use of, for teaching men the hidden truth, and the profound wisdom of the cross. Those feet immovable and pierced with nails are infinitely more profitable to the world, than if they travelled over every part thereof. Those hands nailed and all bleeding, are more efficacious than if at full liberty they performed the greatest miracles, and the most heroic actions. Thy great work, O Lord! is to love and to do what shews the most love. Now nothing shews it so much as to live and die upon the cross for those one loves. Behold what pleases thee, what is esteemed by thee, and what charms thee; and it is also what thou requirest of thy faithful servants. It is what thou thyself hast done all thy life, and what thou consummatest in thy death.

VI. O Eternal Wisdom! deeply imprint in my heart this truth which is so dear to thee; and make me comprehend that there is more merit in suffering grievous afflictions, than in performing great matters. Whilst the soul is crucified, the flesh is subject to it; vice reigns not in it; the passions and appetites do not revolt; the whole man interior and exterior is subject to the cross; he obeys thee, praises thee, and loves thee. That man is not the most holy, who receives the most remarkable favours, and the sweetest consolations. No, Lord, he that is the most prevented with the blessings of thy
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sweetness, is not the most agreeable to thee, if he is not at the same time the most crucified. The man that suffers in silence, and perseveres with love in tribulation, persecutions, contempts, derelictions, and desolations, is he whom thou lovest and esteamest most. When he is come to that, he may say, he has profited; and he is much more capable of bearing fruit in thy house, than all those that serve thee by any other way.

VII. O fire of divine love! it is by means of thy light, that we discover in Christ that truth so unknown to flesh and blood. What art thou doing? Why dost thou not inflame me? Why dost thou not crucify me with him? Why dost thou permit me to lead a soft and easy life, whilst Jesus is overwhelmed with sorrows? O Saviour of my soul! since it is in the cross that true wisdom consists, suffer me not to live in darkness. Dart upon me a ray of that divine light. Receive me into the number of those that carry the cross after thee; and grant that I may never depart from the way thou hast pointed out to me.

Give thy consolations to those that deserve them, and serve thee faithfully: for my part, I only beg of thee thy love and thy cross, till thy love has reduced me to such a state, that my whole life and all my joy may be in suffering for thee. Permit me, O my Jesus! to embrace thy cross, to be fastened thereto, to measure the whole extent of it, to examine all its circumstances, and to reap from each of thy pains, the fruits of grace which are hidden therein.

To the Left Hand.

I adore thee, O divine Hand! which supportest Heaven and Earth, hast received sinners, and hast saved all those that have trusted in thee. Since this Hand is the first that is nailed, is nearest the heart inflamed with love, and consequently it is the most sensible of pain: Command, O Lord! that my miserable heart may be nailed with it. Remember that the only thing which thou exactest of man, is that he give thee his heart; because that heart is only secure in thy Hands. Here it is, O my Saviour! receive it into that Hand, that it may be nailed with it to the cross, remain fixed thereon, and never be separated from thence. How happy shall I be, if thou vouchsafest to receive and keep it! For thou knowest it will fall, if it once comes out of thy Hands; and if it has the liberty of following its own desires, it cannot avoid the precipice and eternal death. Take it then, O my Jesus! thou life and love of my soul! fasten it, transpierce it, and never forsake it.

To the Right Hand.

I adore thee, O Powerful Hand! that art the strength of the weak, and dispenser of graces. Though thou art nailed to the cross, thou lovest not thy strength; and thou augmentest my confidence. Transpierce at the same time this miserable flesh wholly terrestrial and sensual; so timorous, when it ought to suffer for thee; so fearless and rash in the occasions of offending thee; and so negligent in thy service. Fix it to the cross by thy fear; repress its appetites and desires; destroy in it that law of the members, so contrary to the spirit, so rebellious to thy love, and such an enemy to thy cross. Let my spirit, being crucified with thee, live from henceforth only in thee and for thee; and let all the luxury and corruption of my flesh be consumed by the fire of thy charity.

To the Feet.

I adore you, O sacred Feet! which were so often wearied in seeking me, and carried our Saviour to the cross, whereon you were nailed for my love! Correct the criminal steps which I have hitherto taken; rectify my ways; bring me back from my wandering; make me enter again into the way of truth. Fasten my feet with thine, O Lord! that I may run no longer after vanity. Fix to my feet all the desires and affections of my soul, that I may no longer follow any other tracts but those which thou hast pointed out to me. May that precious blood, which flows from thy feet and hands, fall upon me; may it communicate its virtue to me, may it purify me, and transform me wholly into thee. Separate me from the earth, elevate me with thee, whilst they elevate thy cross. Permit me not to leave it, till thou hast accomplished in me every thing which thou teachest me by it; that being dead to myself and full of thy love, I may have no other will but thine.

O most pure Mother of God! by the sorrows which your heart felt, when you heard the strokes of the hammers on the nails wherewith they pierced the feet and hands of your only Son, obtain for me of him the grace of being all my life the faithful companion of his cross. O blessed souls! whose felicity is the work of those pierced hands, assist me with your intercession, that I may live on earth in the same wounds, by which ye reign in heaven. *Amen.*

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ, whilst they elevate his Cross.

OPEN my eyes, O my Jesus! enlighten my mind and soften my heart with the fire of thy love, that I may feel the cruel pains which thou sufferest, whilst they are elevating thy cross, and when the whole weight of thy body is supported by the wounds of thy feet and hands. Since thou endurest such a dreadful torment in thy body for me, is it not reasonable that I should feel it, at least in my heart? But alas, O Lord! I cannot feel it but by thee. Communicate therefore to my soul the sense of thy pains, spare me not, grant that I may experience them all, and feel in particular the dislocating of thy bones, the breaking of thy nerves, the shakings of thy cross, and the shouts and affronts of the populace. But grant also that I may see the dispositions of thy heart, the submission, peace, silence, love, and all the virtues which accompany thee on the cross; imprint them deeply in my heart, that I may profit by the pains which it shall please thee to send me for the future, and learn to suffer all without complaint.

II. Behold thou art then elevated on the cross, placed between heaven and earth, exposed to the eyes of the whole universe. I adore thee, O Son of the living God! O God of my heart, O love of my soul! I adore thee, O thou glory of the just, and crown of the blessed! I adore thee, O source of eternal Happiness! I adore thee, O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, I adore thee, O tree of life, laden with all the fruits of grace and glory!

I prostrate myself before thee, acknowledging that thou art my only hope, and that thou possessest all the good things that I can desire. If I am poor, thou art infinitely rich; if I am a sinner, thou art my Saviour; if I am a slave, thou art my deliverer; if I am miserable, thou art merciful; and if I am tepid, thou art totally inflamed with love. I find in thee, O my Jesus! the remedy of all my evils; and a heart ever ready to assist me. I love thee, O Saviour of my soul! and my greatest sorrow is, not to love thee more.

III. Why do not my eyes become two sources of continual tears, and my heart a furnace of eternal love? Though I should be crucified with thee, O my God! what would it be in comparison of what I owe thee? But if thou wilt not that I suffer the torment

ment of the cross, grant at least that I may burn with the fire of thy love.

O love! which devourest that divine lamb; and makest thy victim thereof, now is the moment of thy triumph. Thou art satisfied at last, by seeing him overwhelmed with sorrow, and consumed with love. I adore thee, O divine love! love *infinite, eternal, sovereign, rich, powerful, and liberal*; exercise thy activity upon me, and transform me into that which I love. I adore thee, O sweet Jesus! in the state wherein I behold thee. Thou art not exalted so high, as immediately to ascend into heaven, and to withdraw thyself from our eyes; nor so near the earth, as to touch it. Thou art suspended between the one and the other; and thy power is felt by both: it even penetrates into that hell, where the just, who have been expecting thee for so many ages, are going to see the end of so long a banishment, and to enter into their eternal country.

In that tribunal thou judgest the world, condemnest thy enemies, openest the gates of heaven, pardonest sinners, and reconcilest them to God. There it is that thou gatherest together thy children dispersed over the world, revokest the sentence of eternal death pronounced against mankind, sanctifiest sufferings, and makest them the surest way of attaining to glory. There it is thou inflamest hearts; dissipatest the obscurity and blindness of men; and givest thyself to all those that desire thee, according to their desires of thee, and in proportion to their necessities.

IV. But whence comes this prodigious change, O thou life of my soul! How different dost thou appear this day from thyself! Thou wast born in the secret and silence of the night. Thou wast visited and adored only by some shepherds and three wise men. Thou wast acknowledged in the temple only by two just souls. Thou livedst in obscurity for thirty years, and spentest only three amongst men. Thou didst manifest thyself after thy resurrection, only to a few persons, for a short time, and in retired places. Thy disciples alone were the witnesses of thy ascension, and a cloud soon deprived them of the sight of thy glory; but thou wast pleased to be crucified publicly upon a mountain, at noon-day, in the time of the *Pasch*, when the *Jews* were assembled at *Jerusalem*, from all quarters, between two thieves, with thy arms extended, and thy heart full of sorrow and love.

Be thou, O Lord! blessed, praised, and glorified eternally by all creatures. Behold the end of thy career; our redemption is accomplished: *all is consummated*, and thou wilt not yet be separated from the cross. Thou speakest neither of testament nor burial; thou

thou art only taken up with the thoughts of suffering and loving; and this is what thou wilt chiefly have us to learn from thee. Thou wilt be thereby the model of all men. Thou requirest them to imitate thee, not in thy miracles and glory, but in thy sufferings and cross. There it is thou particularly desirest to be adored, praised, loved, and imitated.

V. O God of my heart! being so great, so rich, so liberal, and so independent as thou art, how canst thou love men thus? What dost thou see in them that is capable of gaining thy love? If I judge of others by myself, I dare affirm thou wilt find nothing in us but matters of contempt and aversion. For I have not loved thee with my whole heart, though thou alone deservest my whole love. I have not sought thee with a sincere desire of pleasing and serving thee in all things. I have often offended thee by violating thy holy law. I have lived according to the inclinations of my flesh; have accomplished the will of my enemies; and have shunned the occasions of suffering for thee and with thee; always tepid in spiritual exercises, and always earnest in procuring myself corporeal pleasures; blind in the way of heaven, knowing in the interest of this world; always full of myself, and empty of thee.

Beholding me such as I am, O Lord! and much wickedder than I can express, what hast thou found in me, that obliges thee to love me? O infinite love! *love without bounds* on thy part, and *without merit* on mine. It is because thou art divine, that thou artest thus; and thou art so admirable, only because I am full of corruption, and worthy of hatred. Thou sufferest thyself to be crucified in order to heal me; sacrificest thyself to save me; and wholly immutable as thou art, thou subjectest thyself to all these *changes* to *change* me. What shall I return to thee, O divine love! for all the blessings thou hast bestowed on me? Which way shall I acknowledge the excess of thy bounties? I offer thee to thyself for me; because I see nothing but thee alone that can fully satisfy thee. I lay at the foot of thy cross my sins and miseries, which are my only possession. I resign into thy hands the body and soul which thou hast given me, and cast them into that fire with which thou burnest for me.

VI. Remember, O sweet Jesus! that thou hast promised us to draw all things to thee, when thou wert elevated from the earth. Although I be nothing before thee, and my sins also have rendered me worse than nothing, yet I am thy creature, and the work of thy hands. Thou art in that state the emblem of those blessings thou hast promised us; and the two thieves, crucified with thee, are the emblems of our misery, and of the extreme need we have

of thy mercy. Since this is the moment, wherein thou oughtest to draw all things to thee, suffer no exception to be made of me. Draw me to thee, O my God! unite me to thee, and change me into thee. Triumph over me, O Lord! as the love thou hast for me triumphs over thee. Manifest the glory of thy power, and the riches of thy goodness, by crucifying me with thee, and transforming me into thee.

O Saviour of my soul! live and reign alone in it, and make me live crucified in thee. Let all my glory be in dying for thee, and all my life in living in thee! From this moment let all creatures be in regard of me, as if they were not; and let nothing remain within me but thee alone, O crucified Jesus! for thou art the love and life of my soul, my only good, and all my felicity.

O Love, O cross, O crucified Jesus! I know not what more to say or ask. May I lose all things, may all things abandon me. Speak thou alone to me, live and reign alone in me. Occupy, possess, and consume my heart: for I am, and always will be wholly thine, O Jesus! my glory, my hope, my love, and my all.

XLIV. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

The Time he remaineth on the Cross.

THE pains which our Saviour endured on the cross, are incomprehensible, either as to their number, or greatness. One of the chief, was the slowness of his death. Exhausted as he was of blood and strength, by all the preceding torments, he could never have lived so long on the cross, if he had not miraculously preserved his life; that he might not die till he had suffered every thing he had resolved to suffer.

As he then received no sort of ease, the delay of his death was to him an encrease of pain: for if he leaned his head upon the cross, the thorns wherewith he was crowned were still forced in the further. If he endeavoured to keep his head upright, that endeavour occasioned him a new pain. If he let it incline forwards, he beheld nothing but objects of grief, *the tears* of his Blessed Mother, *the dejection* of his friends, and *the joy and triumph* of his enemies. If he supported himself upon his feet or hands, his flesh was torn, his wounds dilated, and his nerves broken. If he would deprecate

his body of that support, and keep it as it were suspended, his bones were dislocated, and the violence he did himself, served only to augment his pain and weakness the more.

How capable is this long succession of pains, endured without intermission or consolation, of moving a soul to compassion that meditates on them in silence! They began in the evening when our Saviour was taken in the garden of *Olives*, and continued the whole night. From about six o'clock in the morning till eleven, Christ was dragged before all the tribunals of *Jerusalem*, scourged, crowned with thorns, condemned to death, laden with his cross, and led unto *Calvary*. At eleven he was nailed to the cross, whereon he expired only about three in the afternoon. At that moment the sun was obscured, the world was covered with darkness, the earth quaked, the rocks were rent, the sepulchres opened, and the bodies of saints, which were to rise with Christ, were seen by many, in order to give testimony of him.

II. But all these prodigies, which were so many proofs of his power, by which the elements shewed, in such a manner as they were capable, how sensible they were of the unjust death of the Creator and Saviour of the world, were also marks of his love to us, and contributed to the perfection of his sacrifice. For by that darkness he deprived himself of the comfort which the light commonly gives to dejected minds: and perhaps also that earthquake, by shaking his cross renewed his pains. However it be, there is ground for being astonished, that a human body exhausted of blood, overwhelmed with torments and fatigues, could live so long upon the cross, amidst such violent pains, without any alleviation, or help but that which he expected from death: and that death, which alone was to put an end to all his pains, was delayed, and came on but very slowly.

For though *Pilate*, when our Saviour's body was begged of him, was surprized that he was already dead; that surprise was from a man insensible, and even inattentive to every thing that Christ had suffered in the pretorium; since the pain alone of the scourging, and crowning with thorns, was capable of killing the strongest man. Thus he was so weakened, when he went from *Pilate's* house, that the time he lived afterwards, was much more the effect of a divine power than of any human strength.

III. The extreme meanness of those in whose hands the Son of God, the King of Heaven and Earth, was, still augmented the pain and ignominy of his punishment: for they must have been very miserable, since they regarded our Saviour's poor cloaths, as

a rich booty, and cast lots for his coat, because they could not divide it, as it was without any seam; nor agree amongst themselves to whom it should belong, because they were all desirous of having it.

Behold what those were to whom our Saviour was delivered up, by whose hands he was led, bound, dragged, scourged, and crucified with all the rigour and indignity that could be expected from those people, more like beasts than men. For instead of having any sense of compassion for our Saviour in that extremity, they added also to so rude a treatment; abuses, insults, and a thousand injurious words.

Nothing was omitted that could contribute to the perfection of so great a sacrifice. Our Saviour suffered in every part of his body, and in all the powers of his soul: the senses themselves, which are free from pain in common criminals, had their particular punishment in him. His eyes were tormented by the sight of his blessed mother, of his friends, and enemies; his ears by the mockeries and blasphemies which he heard; his smell by the stench of the place where the bones of the dead were thrown; his palate by the gall and vinegar; his whole humanity by a general privation of help and comfort.

IV. Is it possible that so many torments endured for us, should be unprofitable to us? Shall it be said that Christ dies for obtaining our love, and that we should die without possessing his? were we his supreme happiness, and last end, as he is ours; could he do any thing more for us? He is our God, our first principle, the author and restorer of our being, our eternal happiness; and perhaps the thing in the world we are most forgetful of, is the love we owe him.

He saw our ingratitude when he expired on the cross, and that sight was more sensible to him than all his torments. He is still at this day such as he was then: in spite of all our demerits, he changes not in regard of us; and it may also be said, that we are always the same in respect of him. But there is this difference between his conduct and ours, he is always a merciful Father, and a faithful friend; and we are always ungrateful children, and unprofitable servants; he dies out of the love he bears us, and we live without loving him.

In spite of the extreme pains with which he was oppressed, he punctually executed every thing he came to perform.

V. For

V. For, first, he accomplished the promise he had made us, of drawing all things to himself when he should be elevated from the earth, not only by opening to us the gates of Heaven, expiating our sins, making one flock of those in Heaven and earth collected together in the unity of the same love, destroying the power of our enemies, and acquiring us infinite treasures of merits; but also by gaining hearts by the attractives of his divine sweetness, and inducing them to seek in him alone their repose and happiness. For as the loadstone draws iron, and amber chaff, by a gentle and secret virtue at the same time; so that immolated Lamb draws all those to him whose hearts are hard like iron, and dry like chaff; and though we see nothing in him but pains, ignominies, and desertions, which sight makes nature even tremble; yet he found by drinking that cup, the admirable secret of reserving the whole bitterness thereof to himself, and of making his servants taste an ineffable sweetness therein: so that it seems, in respect of them, thorns are changed into roses, bitterness into sweetness, labour into rest, torments into pleasures, and death into a life full of tranquility.

He shews us the cross, without terrifying us; lays it upon us, without overwhelming us; and invites us to follow him, but he smooths the way for us. The points of the nails and thorns where-with he is pierced, are blunted in him, as one may say; sufferings in him lose all their severity, and when they pass from him to us, they are mingled with a secret unction, which renders them sweet, comfortable, and even delightful to us. Indeed we commonly perceive that when the love of the world and ourselves withdraws us from the cross, the interior communication with Christ becomes bitter to us, and we no longer find any thing but weariness and disgust in his imitation. We ought then to return to him without delay, to acknowledge our wandering, to re-engage ourselves in the bonds of his love, to desire to suffer with him, and to persuade ourselves that he has reserved the bitterness of the cup for himself, in order to let us have all the sweetness thereof.

But we know also by the experience of the saints, to whom God has granted the grace of loving and desiring sufferings, that they are so bound to their cross, by the virtue of that crucified Lamb, that they are not allowed to seek any consolation out of it, that they find in the midst of their severest trials, an assurance and repose which creatures cannot bestow; which makes them acknowledge at last, that the cross is the true source of the fortitude, consolation and tranquility of the soul.

Secondly, our Saviour has most perfectly accomplished the great work of our redemption: for being upon the cross, as in the preperest

perest place and posture for reconciling us to his father, he ceased not from begging pardon for us with bitter tears, offering his blood and life for meriting it. This offering and prayer were so powerful, that he abundantly obtained all that he desired: so that after having fully satisfied the Divine Justice for sinners, and acquired them a compleat remission; there still remained for them infinite treasures of merits, and an inexhaustible source of strength and light for overcoming the enemies of their salvation, for penetrating the profoundest secrets of God, for attaining on earth to an heroic sanctity, and for possessing in Heaven a most sublime degree of glory.

But because the sentence pronounced against us, after the sin of our first father, had subjected us to the devil and death, by a law written on our flesh, Christ revoked that sentence, by nailing to the cross the flesh he had received from *Adam*; and reversed the decree of our condemnation with his blood, in order to write that of our pardon in its place. He brought us into his new covenant by virtue of a new testament, whereby, as *the first begotten among many brethren*, he calls us to the participation of his heavenly inheritance *Rom. viii. 29.* But as a testament does not take place till after the death of the testator, he shewed his last will by his very death, whereby we are become the lawful heirs of Eternal Glory.

Hence it is that the Evangelic law is called *the new testament*, which was confirmed by our Saviour's death; and that his blood is called *the blood of the Eternal testament*, *Heb. xiii. 20.* because after the testator's death, nothing can be changed in the testament; and by the price of our Saviour's blood, we were delivered from the slavery of the devil, restored to the liberty of the children of God, and to the right of possessing the goods which we had lost by sin.

VII. But Christ, who knew of what consequence it was to us to follow his doctrine, if we would not lose again the goods he had acquired us, and how much we ought to fear the enemies, which he had overcome in such a manner, as still to have left them the power of exercising our virtue, failed not to shew us in himself amidst his torments, the truth of his doctrine, and the artifices of our enemies; that none might be excused on account of ignorance, in a condition so necessary for obtaining the possession of the heavenly inheritance.

Thus being elevated upon the Cross, he openly condemned, by his example in the sight of Heaven and Earth, the pride of life, the disorderly sensual pleasures, the vanity of riches, and all manner of disobedience

disobedience to the law of God; and at the same time taught us the perfection of all virtues which we ought to practise. But by teaching us these virtues, he heightened the value of them, sanctified them in his person, and gave a new merit to the hatred of sin, purity of heart, the pains of this life, abnegation of self-will and our own judgment, privation of worldly pleasures, patience in adversity, meekness and humility, poverty of spirit, love of enemies, fidelity in temptations, and to a perfect charity towards God and our neighbour: and because every thing cannot be expressed, he presented himself to us as a mirror wherein we clearly see the Evangelic truths without any danger of illusion or surprise: for nothing shall be approved of in the judgment of God, but what was approved on the Cross.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ living on the Cross.

THOU art wholly mine, O my Saviour! thou art all for me, wholly sacrificed for my necessities and salvation. What thou hast taken from me was the cause of thy labours, and the source of my happiness. Thou art poor by what thou hast from me, and I am rich by what I have from thee. But the goods which I possess in thee are so great, that I cannot esteem myself poor.

Thou hadst no need of me, when thou wast clothed with my flesh: thou tookest it only to give it to me, to suffer for me, and to make thyself be loved by me. Thou art not content with delivering it up entirely for the price of our redemption, thou wast pleased there should be no part of it but what suffered, and was to me a proof of thy love. Thou givest to me thy Divinity, which communicates an infinite virtue to every thing thou dost, and to all thou sufferest for me. Thou givest me thy humanity drowned in a sea of sufferings: thou givest me that Head crowned with thorns; that Hair bloody and torn off; those Cheeks livid and bruised; those Eyes swelled up and bathed with tears; that Mouth moistened with gall and vinegar; those Feet and Hands pierced with nails; that Flesh torn; those Nerves stretched; and those Bones dislocated: thou givest me thy thoughts, thy desires, thy honour, and thy life.

Thou

Thou leavest me, also, in dying, thy blessed Mother: and requirest her to be mine. Thou reconcilest me to thy Eternal Father, communicatest thy merits to me, offerest me thy mercy, and satisfiest thy justice for me: thou diest that I may live, sheddest the very last drop of thy blood to purify me, and workest all those prodigies through the extreme love thou hast for me.

II. O Infinite Goodness! how much better thou observest the precept of love which thou hast given me, towards me who am a sinner, than I observe it in regard of thee, though thou art my Lord and my God! Thou lovest me with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy power, with all thy strength, with thy whole body, with all thou hast, with all thou art; and thou givest me all these things so liberally, in order to make up for me an immense treasure of eternal blessings. O thou God of my heart! O thou true life of my soul! I cannot have for so great a love, either the esteem, or acknowledgment which it deserves; but I adore it, praise it, and bless it, to the utmost of my power.

Why have I not the ardour and purity of all the angels, of all the saints of Heaven, and of all the just on earth, in order to love thee, and to correspond at least in some manner to the excess of thy charity? But thou dost all these things, O my God! in a manner proportioned to what thou art, that is, with an infinite perfection; and for my part, as I am miserable, I do every thing miserably.

Thou hast also vouchsafed, by an excess of condescension, to become weak, with the weak, poor with the poor, and to appear a sinner with sinners; to make us comprehend, that thou dost not expect from us such works as are equal to thine, but that thou art content with our poverty and good desires. I remit therefore into thy hands, O my God! all that I have, and all that I am. I offer to thee all that I have received from thee, that is, my body, my soul, my senses, my strength, and my life. I for ever consecrate to thy service what talents, friends, wit, knowledge, goods of nature, fortune and grace, thou hast given me; and I lay all at the foot of thy Cross.

III. Hitherto, O my Saviour! I have made very bad use of thy gifts: thou hast bestowed them abundantly upon me, that I might employ them in thy service, and in meriting thy grace and glory; and I have employed them in offending thee, and in meriting thy wrath, and my own condemnation. But I return to thee, O my God! with the whole extent of my heart, and abandon myself
entirely

entirely to all the pains, whether interior or exterior, which thou shalt please to inflict upon me for my sins, or for thy service,

I conjure thee by the love which thou testifiest to me, to receive the offering I make thee. Enter, O Lord! into my soul, see by my eyes, hear by my ears, speak by my mouth, and become the principle of all my motions. In flame my heart with thy love, support me with thy hand, make me walk in thy footsteps, pardon me the evil I have committed, amend in me what displeases thee, crucify me with thee, for thee, and in thee, O my love, and only hope.

Since thou givest me all thou art, and all thou hast, grant that I may be content with thee alone, that I may desire none but thee alone, and that I may sigh only after thee. Be thou alone my treasure, my life, my repose, my safety, and my glory. May my soul seek thee alone, may it esteem itself happy in finding thee alone, may it sweetly repose in thy arms, and may it forget every thing else, even itself, in order to think no longer of any thing but thee.

IV. What wonder, O Lord! the cross and the hours thou remainest thereon are severe only to thee, and sinners find their comfort, their ease, and remedy therein. Every hour is to thee a cruel agony, by the decaying of thy strength, and the weight of thy body, which augments thy pains, by enlarging thy wounds. The insults and abuses of thy enemies are renewed every moment; the severity of the cross is not mollified; the eternal Father abates nothing of his rigour; the sun refuses thee its light; every thing contributes to torment thee; and we alone find our advantage in thy torments. Thou reservest to thyself alone, O divine and innocent lamb! all the pain and bitterness of the cross; and vouchsafest that it be to me a source of ineffable sweetness. May thy love be blessed and praised in all ages.

For it is true, O Lord! that all my happiness is in the cross. If I am a slave, I find my liberty therein; if I am persecuted, I find a refuge therein; if I am afflicted, thou givest me comfort therein; and if I am oppressed by false witnesses, thou teachest me the eternal truth therein. If my friends abandon me, I become thy son thereby; if I am assaulted, thou defendest me thereby; if I am unjustly condemned, thou justifiest me thereby; if I sin, thou pardonest me thereby; if I am weak, thou supportest me thereby; if I go astray, thou callest me back thereby; if I return, thou receivest me thereby; if I am ignorant, thou instructest me thereby; if I am blind, thou enlightenest me thereby; if I fall, thou raisest
me

me up thereby; if I am lukewarm, thou makest me fervent thereby; if I am fervent, thou inflamest me still more thereby; if I profit, thou assistest me thereby; and if I persevere, thou crownest me thereby.

V. It is in the cross that I enjoy a solid repose, and a real consolation. Though I weep under the cross, I am content therein; and the tears I shed there, are a thousand times sweeter than all worldly joys. On every occasion, at every time, in every place, and in every state, thou art, O my crucified Jesus! my hope and security. Thou art the sincere friend, the faithful companion, the prudent master, and the charitable Father of my soul.

When I consider thy hands and feet pierced with nails, thy head crowned with thorns, thy whole body covered with blood and wounds, and when I approach to thee, I perceive my heart inflamed with love. Though thou art nailed to the cross, weakened, dejected, languishing, and dying, yet thou receivest me when I come to thee. All livid, all bloody, and wholly despised as thou art, thou seemest beautiful, amiable, charming, and adorable to me.

What do I then, O my God! where am I, when I am not with thee? I find thee severe only when I fly from thee, and dreadful only when I forget thee: for if I use any endeavour for returning to thee, and embracing thy cross, I discover that I was deceived. Thou soon makest my heart sensible of thee, thou receivest me, embracest me, and heapest thy blessings upon me. O that I had never forgotten thee! that I had never departed from thee! Love thou, O my soul! this divine Saviour, and forget every thing else for his love. The world cannot do thee any thing but harm, and Jesus has taken thy evils upon himself, and has given thee his love with all his blessings.

O holy Cross! the faithful companion of my Saviour; thou hast possessed him for a long time; let him descend and give him to me, that I may receive him in my soul; or rather enter thou with him into my soul, that I may remain fastened to him and thee, and that I may never be either without him or thee. Here it is that my miseries must end, that the old man must be renewed, and that I must begin to live in the newness of the spirit of Jesus.

VI. O divine Cross! though Jesus be not wearied with suffering, be thou wearied in tormenting him. *Thou alone hast deserved to bear the victim and sacrifice of the whole world,* the source of grace,
and

and the price of glory. Bow down thy branches, O tree of life! Soften thy hardness, and treat that innocent body with less rigour.

And thou, O Lord! come at last, after so many torments, to repose in my soul that desires thee so earnestly, to which thy presence is so sweet and necessary; fill it, possess it, since thou hast created it, and accomplish in it the work which thou hast begun on the cross.

O most blessed Mother of God! inseparable companion of our Saviour's cross, you see with how much labour he has sought me: prevail by your intercession that he may not have laboured in vain; and obtain me the grace to live for the future only in him and by him. O celestial choirs! who have learnt of Christ to love sinners, and who rejoice in the conversion of one alone, beg for mine of our Lord, that being wholly his, I may desire nothing more than to be crucified with him. *Amen.*

What CHRIST teaches and condemns on the Cross.

O DIVINE light! that *enlightenest souls sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death*, that restoredst sight to the blind Tobias, when touched with thy beauty, he purified his soul, that he might receive thy whole brightness, and place all his hope in thee. O eternal light! that couldst not be darkened either by the affronts wherewith they vainly endeavoured to cover thee, the company of thieves that are on thy sides, the eclipse of the sun, or the whole malice of thy enemies. O pure light! that shinest with an increased splendor, revealest to us the sublimest truths, discoverest to us the illusions of human life, and clearly shewest us the way to heaven; that becamest sensible to the thief that blasphemed thee, to the executioners that crucified thee, to the darkness that obscured thee, and to the rocks that were rent: dart one of thy rays upon this blind and ungrateful heart, that it may see what thou condemnest and approvest on the cross. Warm this heart with the love of thy divine wisdom, with the hatred of all things which thou prohibitest, and with a desire of following every thing thou teachest.

First Instruction.

The foundation of a worldly life, and the unworthy engagements which hinder us from following Christ, and withdraw us from the obedience and love we owe to God, are, *concupiscence of the eyes*, that is, the desire of worldly goods; *concupiscence of the flesh*; and *pride of life*. This is what makes us forsake the fountain of living waters, to seek for poisoned streams. We are always insatiable, sensual, proud, and as presumptuous as if we were something, though we are nothing. We love ourselves more than God, who is our supreme happiness, and who alone deserves to be loved. Behold what the Son of the living God, and the master of eternal truth, was pleased to destroy upon the cross, by his love, his sufferings, and his death. His silence complains, and his example alone condemns, banishes, and denounces a malediction against a worldly life, with every thing that is built upon that foundation.

And to begin by *pride of life*, we see that Christ being equal to his Father humbled himself, out of his love to our souls, so far as to deliver himself up to those who intended to bind him, strike him, affront him, crucify him, and put him to death. Though he was the *king of glory*, the only Son of the eternal Father, *the figure of his substance*; the splendor of the saints, and the divine majesty whom we adore, yet he became *a worm, a reproach of men and out-cast of the people*. How can we exalt ourselves, seeing him so humble? If he suffered them to abuse his divinity, humanity, and truth; to calumniate his works, his life, and his doctrine, what can the proud expect? It is by the humiliations of the cross that he reigned, entered into his glory, and shewed to all mankind, how much he esteems the humble, and hates the proud.

Humble my pride, O humble Jesus! May thy divine Spirit become sensible to my miserable heart, and consume therein that innate root of pride, which increases and strengthens with me; which follows me every where, insinuates itself into all my works, even the most holy, and perhaps has some share in the prayer I am now making to thee. Extend thy arms, O Lord! shew in me the power of thy grace, and confound my pride. Inspire me with a sincere hatred and contempt of myself; a cordial and intimate love of humility, that I may be worthy of being thy disciple, love what thou lovest, follow what thou teachest, and shun pride which thou abhorrest.

Second Instruction.

Humility subjected Christ to his Father, so far as to suffer the ignominious death of the cross, out of obedience and love. He taught us thereby how we ought to esteem obedience, and that we must observe the law of God, even at the expence of our honour, our blood, and our life, by rejecting every thing contrary thereto, as the pest and poison of our souls. He declares to us also, that he will not hear those who defend their non-observance of his law by excuses and pretences; or who observe it otherwise than he has commanded; and that those persons live in a most dangerous illusion. Miserable sinners that we are! alas, how many faults to be expiated; and how many evils to be healed, does that precious blood find in us! How much more power hath the law of the world, and human respect, over us, than zeal for the divine law, and how blind is the world we follow!

O God of mercy! draw my whole heart to thee, and permit me no longer to walk in the ways of iniquity. I return to obedience: my present resolution is to live for the future in entire submission to thy will, and to suffer rather a thousand deaths than to displease thee. I for ever renounce the laws of the world, and every thing I have committed against thine. Pardon me, O Lord! by the virtue of thy wounds; and grant I may never more depart from the obedience I owe thee.

Compel, O my Saviour! all souls to come to thee, by the sweet violence of thy love; subject them thus to obedience. O that we were all assembled in the same fold, that we all heard thy voice, and that we followed thee every where, O divine shepherd of our souls! O love, that canst do all things; warm, dilate, and inflame all our hearts. Destroy this spirit of independency and revolt. May we be all subject to thee out of love, since thou hast redeemed us all by love; and may we place our whole glory in being the slaves of thy goodness and beauty.

Third Instruction.

The other foundations of a worldly life are, the love of pleasures, and the desire of possessing the goods we see: these two passions blind us in *time*, and make us lose the happiness of *eternity*. Hence it is that Christ so openly condemns them on the cross. He is poor, naked, and abandoned thereon to that degree, as not to find

find any one that would give him so much as a little drink in the burning thirst he endures. He is so overwhelmed with pain, that there is no part of his body free from it; that he cannot rest his head but upon thorns, nor support his body but upon nails, which tear his feet and hands. He expires at length in the midst of torments and reproaches, in the privation of all manner of help. O worldly life! O vanity of the human mind! O desire of riches! O sensual delights! O shameful pleasures! O unworthy amusements! which corrupt souls; what place will ye find in our Saviour's cross?

Mercy, O my Jesus! alas, how many times have I lost thee, for having loved what thou condemnest upon the cross? How many times have I esteemed the satisfaction of my body more than the communication of thy Spirit? O divine goodness! here my tongue must be silent, and my heart must bitterly lament at the abomination of my thoughts, desires, and affections. I have sinned, O Lord! I have often sinned, I have grievously sinned. I confess all my crimes and miseries before thee. Have mercy on me, O my God! O wounds of Jesus assist me! O cross of Jesus, defend me! O just judge, command all torments to fall upon me, and all creatures to arm themselves against me, to revenge the offences I have committed against thee.

Or rather, O sweet Jesus! change me this moment; make my heart pass from the flesh to the spirit, from vanity to truth, and from earthly things to heavenly ones. Let my life be no longer irregular, or, if it is not to cease from being so, let it finish entirely: for it is much better to die, than to offend thee. O that thou wouldst crucify, O Lord! my eyes, my tongue, and all the senses and desires of this earthly man! Since thou alone canst do it, do it now; that from henceforth I may live only for thee and in thee; sincerely love thy holy truths; and hate every thing that I have loved contrary to thy law.

Fourth Instruction.

Christ proposes himself upon the cross to men, as a model at which they ought to look continually; and as a master, whom they ought always to hear: and he declares to them at the same time, that what he there approves, must save them; and what he there condemns, must destroy them. That in all our exterior works, and in all our interior motions, nothing shall be agreeable to him but what may be justified by the cross; and that every thing contrary thereto, shall be rejected. If we go astray after this, it will be

be our own fault, since we have the crucifix before our eyes. If we are blinded by our desires; if we seek to obscure by vain pretexts this so pure and so clear a truth, or to weaken it by false reasons, we deceive ourselves; because in effect we will not submit ourselves to the lights of the divine wisdom.

Turn away my eyes, O Lord! from all vanity, and from myself, that I may always behold thee, that thou mayest be always present to my mind, and that my heart may praise and bless thee continually for all the favours thou grantest me by thy cross.

Fifth Instruction.

Christ not only discovers to us on the cross the illusions of a worldly life, and destroys all the foundations thereof; but he also teaches us most clearly the whole perfection of a spiritual life. For by his cross he has consecrated the mortification of all disorderly love, the sincere and entire resignation to the divine will, humility of heart, and simple obedience, with a pure love and disengaged from all earthly affection. Behold the *high-way* to a spiritual life, which he opens to us, wherein he is pleased to be our guide, our master, and our model.

He proposes to us at the same time the rule of pure love, which consists in divesting ourselves of all things, to be only with God alone; in following Christ naked, in a perfect nakedness of spirit; in loving without rule or bounds; in loving by suffering, and in suffering by loving, without fearing difficulties, and without excusing ourselves on account of our weakness; because pure love can do all things, and fears nothing. It even acts in rest; is free in servitude; burns without being consumed; and lives in the midst of death; because *Jesus crucified* is its life.

The soul thus finds true liberty in the purity of its love: for that liberty consists not in doing what one will, and in suffering no contradiction; but in being disengaged from all creatures, and united only to Christ; inasmuch that we possess him freely; that we be not hindered either by love, hatred, or any other passion; that nothing may prevent us from suffering for him, from leaving all to follow him, from despising all that he has despised, and from loving all that he has loved, so far as to desire to become for his love, the horror and reproach of men.

The soul that has the happiness of being crucified with Christ, participates in some manner of the qualities of glorious bodies. For when it has once received the impression of pure love, and is
strictly

strictly united to its Saviour, it becomes as it were impassible in a mortal flesh; because it is never either dejected by sadness, or elevated by joy; and being supported and transformed by love, to which it has given itself up, by losing itself with all its senses and powers, sensible objects cannot disturb it. It finds itself then in some manner like the soul of Christ, which enjoying the sight of God, was proof against that ocean of sorrows, which had overflowed the whole interior part.

We may add that the soul which loves God purely, possesses the gift of charity by the light of those truths whereby it is illuminated. For as our Saviour's humiliations could not obscure the splendour of his divine wisdom; so the purity of the evangelic maxims never shines clearer in the soul, than when it is surrounded with the darkness of the world.

It has also the gift of subtilty, which makes it break through all the obstacles that oppose its union with God; as our Saviour, after his resurrection, entered into the room where the apostles were, the doors being shut; and penetrated the heavens in his glorious ascension.

In fine, it is endowed with a kind of agility, which elevates it in an instant from earth to heaven, and carries it every whither, where its love desires it to be.

Is it possible, O God of my soul! that being enlightened with those heavenly truths, which thou teachest me on the cross, I should still crawl in the dust, and never elevate myself above terrestrial affections? All that I can do, O Lord! in the situation I am in, is to embrace thy sacred feet, and to beg mercy of thee. Let thy well-beloved children eat at thy table the divine bread which thou breakest to them, it is enough for me, that am a miserable sinner, to gather up with the *Cananean* woman the crumbs that fall from thence, till it shall please thee to look upon me as one of thy children, and to exalt me to the purity of thy love. Give me, O Lord! the spirit of thy cross, the light of thy eternal truths, and the love of thy adorable person. O love! O infinite sweetness, O thou hope and life of my soul! hearken to my vows, and change me into thee. *Amen.*

XLV. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

The Contempt of his Person, and of the Truths which he teaches.

OUR Saviour endured in the whole course of his passion, a very troublesome sort of pain, whereof we have already spoken in several places, but which we ought to consider more carefully here, because it began again, with more violence, during the time he remained on the cross. This pain was to hear the abusive railleries thrown out against him and his doctrine. For those that passed by, those that beheld him, and those that were crucified with him; the priests, magistrates, and the people; all in fine derided him, and loaded him with maledictions.

That meek lamb heard all those things with an invincible patience; but not without an extreme pain. He had suffered two great affronts the night before. The first in *Caiphas's* house, where after having blindfolded him and struck him in the face, they would oblige him as a false prophet, to divine who had struck him.

The *Jews* had often experienced that he penetrated the bottom of hearts, that their most secret thoughts were known to him, and that having endeavoured in vain to surprise him by crafty deeds, they had always been forced to withdraw with confusion. They resolved to be revenged of him, when they saw him in their hands, by insulting his divine wisdom; and like *Joseph's* brethren, who designing to put him to death, treated him as a dreamer and a whimsical person, in regard of the truths he had foretold them: they gave our Saviour out of raillery, the name of prophet, in order to discredit his predictions and doctrine in a more offensive manner. Being children of those who formerly could not endure the splendor that shone from *Moses's* countenance, when he had been speaking to God; they veiled our Saviour's eyes, which enlightened their darkness, and so remained in their blindness; but that veil prejudiced none but themselves: for it did not hinder Christ from seeing into the bottom of their souls, and it deprived them of his sight, whose countenance was to have rendered them happy.

He suffered the second affront in *Pilate's* house, where the soldiers, after having clothed him with purple, and crowned him with thorns, as a mock king, struck him again with the reed which they had put into his hand instead of a scepter. Our Saviour then, as if he had been convicted of imposture, observed a profound silence, though it was easy for him to have shewn that he was the King

King of Heaven and Earth, by arming the elements and all creatures in his defence. But he would never permit any thing to diminish his pains and reproaches; to which may also be added, the unjust accusations, the false testimonies given against him before the judges, the strokes, injuries, and other bad treatments which he received, the ignominious manner wherein he was dragged through the streets of *Jerusalem*; and all that was done only for destroying in the minds of the people, the reputation which he had acquired among them, the truth of his miracles, and the purity of his doctrine.

II. But when he was nailed to the cross, he bore contempts and mockeries, which many saints have considered as the greatest torment of his passion; because those things which one is most sensible of, are they which torment the most. Now our Saviour had particular reasons for feeling those contempts in a lively manner: for though his other pains were arrived at such a height, as in appearance nothing could be added thereto; yet they were at least of such a nature, that it is permitted to desire them; that one may testify his love towards God by suffering them; and that they are the seed of a glory much more desirable, than the pain is to be feared. But it is not so with blasphemies against God, derision of eternal truths, and contempt of the divinity. And though these actions may sometimes be borne with for just reasons, yet they can never be loved nor desired; because they are always the object of a lawful hatred and detestation.

Christ therefore, whom the zeal of the divine honour, for which he gave his life, interiorly devoured, was much less tormented with the other pains he endured, than with the injuries done against God. For his love rendered those sweet to him; whereas he found nothing in these but what was abominable. A soul that has felt how pure God is, and has been penetrated with the zeal of his glory, may comprehend, though weakly, what our Saviour's interior bitterness was at that time.

Justice and conscience assist one in suffering pain, when he is guilty; and when one is not so, he finds consolation in his innocence; but the more love one has for God, and zeal for his glory, the more sensible one is of the contempt of his truth; and that sensibility is sometimes so great, that a heroic virtue is necessary for supporting it. Our Saviour supported it with as much silence and moderation, as if he had felt nothing; and yet it is certain that that pain was as far above those which he suffered in his flesh, as his love of his father exceeded that of his body.

III. As Jesus crucified between two thieves, was exposed to all the insults of the vilest persons; so there was none but took the liberty of affronting him. *They that passed by, blasphemed him, shaking their heads: and saying, vab, thou who destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again; save thyself: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* Matt. xxvii. 39. Thus they discredited his miracles, and attributed to the temple of Jerusalem, what he had said of the temple of his body.

In like manner the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocking at him, said: he saved others, himself he cannot save: if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God: let him now deliver him, if he is pleased with him: for he said: I am the Son of God. Matt. xxvii. 32. The people cried out on the other hand: *he saved others, let him save himself, if this be the Christ the elect of God.* Luke xxiii. 35.

The soldiers also made sport with him, coming, and offering him vinegar; and saying, if thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. In fine, the thieves that were crucified with him, reproached him; and one of them spoke to him in such an insolent manner, that the other, who began to feel the effect of grace, could not avoid reproving him. Luke xxiii. 35.

But those persons who appeared so united in the design of abusing our Saviour, acted nevertheless by different motives. The bad thief insulted him out of impatience, and the vexation he had in dying on the cross; the people out of licentiousness, which is common; the priests out of hatred, pride, and the secret joy, which the success of their enterprise inspired them with; and those that passed by shook their heads to shew that the fraud was discovered, the truth acknowledged, and the world undeceived.

Though the evangelists have exposed this part of our Saviour's passion in few words, yet it may be judged by the fury wherewith the Jews were animated against him, that they said many other things, which those divine writers deemed unworthy of being related. For the Pharisees did not fail then to repeat that he was a possessed person, a Samaritan, and an impostor, that wrought miracles only by the help of devils. Some reproached him with the solitude, and abandoned state he was in, after having been followed by so great a crowd of people. Others desired him to preach to them from the cross, the heavenly truths they were ready to hear. The people highly commended the prudence and equity of the magistrates, and gave them a thousand blessings. All in fine, or most of them, condemned our Saviour, who knowing at the same

time the bottom of their hearts, and the purity of his doctrine, was most sensibly affected with their blindness.

IV. This is a sort of suffering wherewith Christ often tries his most faithful servants, when he designs to purify them entirely from the love of themselves, and from that of the world, that he may afterwards bestow his gifts plentifully upon them. As a wise captain, he puts his bravest soldiers upon the most difficult enterprises, and exposes them to the most dangerous posts, that they may acquire more glory.

The trial we here speak of, is so much the more severe, as one has often to fight, not only against the repugnances of nature, but also against the zeal of virtue. For it does not suffice the servant of God to resist his own inclinations, and the corrupt world; he finds himself opposed by those who pass for good people, are such even in reality, and think they do well in persecuting him. Then it is he has extreme need of divine light and strength, for knowing the error of those that persecute him, and for resisting so nice a temptation.

It is a great instruction for a virtuous man, to see that the priests and magistrates employed against Christ, not reason and justice, but artifice and authority; that they abused the ignorance of the people, and the licentiousness of the soldiers, to obscure the truth; that the people approved of their conduct, not because they were holy, but because they were more powerful; that the oppression of the innocent was the effect of a knowing prudence; that men fullest of ambition, envy, and self-love, most opposed our Saviour's doctrine, because it contradicted their passions and desires; that the people abused him, out of a natural inclination they have to please the great and imitate them; and that the thieves crucified with him loaded him with injuries, because they made all their happiness consist in being delivered from temporal evils, and because they could not believe that he who did not deliver himself from them, was the Son of God.

In fine, we see they are all actuated either by hatred, interest or malice; that the Holy of Holies passes for a malefactor, because he suffers the punishment thereof; and that his hope in God is regarded as a vain hope, because God delivers him not from the punishment of the cross. Such are the judgments of those that persecute the saints, under pretence of zeal and justice.

V. On the other hand we see that the son of God embraces his cross in such a manner, that death alone is capable of disengaging him from it; that he says not one single word to justify himself; that he conceals his power till the consummation of his sacrifice; that the eternal Father, very far from defending him, abandons him to the insults of sinners; that one of the thieves crucified with him was no sooner illuminated with a ray of heavenly light, than he changes his language and sentiments, acknowledges the divinity of our Saviour, and desires no more to be delivered from the punishment of the cross, but only to be received into the kingdom of Christ. We see it is by the reproaches of the cross, that the Son of God works so many wonders, reigns in the hearts of his elect, is acknowledged by all nations, saves sinners, and confounds his enemies; that those who make profession of following him, regard him as their model, and desire not to overcome but as he overcame.

If we will consider attentively in what manner Christ governs his Church, we shall easily know how necessary it is that those who are the members thereof should resemble their Head. For that divine Shepherd often permits his sheep to be pursued and torn by the wolves. He gives up the head of his precursor, to the revenge of an adulterous woman; the life of his apostles to the enemies of his name; and the goods, repose, and reputation of his servants to the malice of the wicked; because he knows that his Church is never more flourishing, than when it is adorned with the examples, merits, and constancy of the saints.

We must not then be surprised if the world knows them not, and if it persecutes them every where: it perfects their virtue, by desiring to destroy them. As heaven is the country and kingdom of the crucified, God permits them not to be known on earth, but only so far as is necessary for their meriting heaven. He leaves them in obscurity and contempt, that they may sigh continually after a better life; that they may expect only from God alone their happiness and glory; and that the world may not boast of having honoured the children of God.

But, that being obliged to live among the wicked, they may not suffer themselves to be seduced by the ardour of their zeal, they ought to be persuaded of two important truths.

VI. The first is, that God is never more glorified, and that his divine power never appears with more lustre, than when his servants are conformable to Jesus crucified. For by calmly suffering contempt and oppression, without being concerned about their own glory,

glory, they manifest that of God; and the world, blind as it is, discovers it at last in the constancy and purity of their virtue.

The second is, that they ought above all things to be afraid of employing violence and artifice, for preventing their persecutors; for besides such a conduct being directly contrary to the meekness of Christ, and making them lose infinite treasures of merits, it is certain that the wicked always prevail against good people thereby. Those who seek only to support themselves at the expence of virtue, and have not the fear of God before their eyes, are always much better instructed in the art of deceiving, than others, of which they have made a particular study all their life. But those, who walk in the way of pure virtue, love sincerity, and interior peace, and conduct themselves according to the rules of a most heavenly prudence, the sole application of which is, to seek in all things, what is most agreeable to God.

We are invincible, when we fight against those sort of enemies with arms which they are unacquainted with; which are, a patient proof against all bad treatment, a pure faith, a firm hope in God, a disinterested charity towards our neighbour, meekness, silence, and prayer for our persecutors. For in these arms there is a divine virtue, which renders us always victorious, since Christ our head made use of them for overcoming the world, hell, and sin.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ concerning the contempt they had of his truths.

LET heaven and earth, the just and sinners, the angels and saints adore thee, O thou God of my soul! Let me adore thee, and praise thee, and bless thee with them; and let me render thee immortal thanks, for having vouchsafed to suffer on the cross the contempt of thy divine truths. It is true, O Lord! that thou wast covered with reproaches, plunged in a sea of sorrows, and overwhelmed with the waves of temptation. They were not content with making thy most sacred body endure the cruellest torments, they even stood up against thy divinity: and because it was inaccessible to pain, they presumed to assault it by sacrilegious raileries, which the zeal of God's glory, consuming thee interiorly, rendered thee infinitely sensible of.

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The wounds of thy body, the false testimonies, blows, and the other reproaches of thy passion, were indeed very severe pains to thee; but they were mitigated by the pleasure thy love took in saving sinners, and obeying thy Father. But to see and hear them abuse the sovereign truth, and the divine nature which dwells in thee; to suffer thyself to be treated as an impostor, thou who inspiredst the prophets, searchest the bottom of hearts, and from whom all truth proceeds, is a torment which no created mind can comprehend the greatness of: and yet, among all these blasphemies which rend thy heart, thou keepest a deep silence, allowing thy enemies to triumph; and though thou art thyself the divine truth, thou dost not confound falsehood and calumny.

II. Whence comes this insatiable patience, O divine love! Wilt thou then endure all manner of torments in the highest degree? And why must there be nothing in thee, but what is tormented? Whips, thorns, the cross, and a thousand other punishments are insufficient for thee; thou must also behold thy holy doctrine and divine truths, become the subject of the raileries and blasphemies of the people.

Here, O Lord! my heart finds itself filled with bitterness, and my mind seized with astonishment. Thou hast reserved for thyself, O Saviour of my soul! that sea of pains; because for supporting it, a divine strength was requisite, according to which thou proportionedst thy labours. For that pain is far above the force of nature; and if thy servants ever happened to be able to suffer any thing like it, they are indebted to thee for the same, O my God! and their constancy was thy work.

I love thee, O divine Jesus! I love thee: and that deep sorrow, wherewith I see thy heart penetrated, inflames mine so, that I wish I could be consumed with thy love. The love thou hast for me, is unbounded, not only in its tenderness, but also in its strength: thou art not content with loving me infinitely, thou wilt also suffer infinitely for me. Here it is, O my Saviour! that I ought to confess my weakness before thee.

III. When I think I am able to suffer something for thy love, my love conceives a joy thereon. When I imagine thy enemies are coming to fall upon me, in order to make me abandon thy service, I find myself full of strength, and resolved to resist them unto death. Even when thy servants persecute me, though that persecution be much more sensible to me, yet I suffer it also, being persuaded that thou permittest it for the punishment of my faults. But when I find myself obliged to suffer for having loved the truth,
and

and been faithful in obeying thee, though I be convinced thou hast given me an example thereof, and though I desire to imitate thee, yet that degree of perfection frightens me; and the very truth for which I suffer, which ought to be my consolation, redoubles my pain.

When I behold thy enemies, in order to maintain a falsehood against thy glory, render the clearest truths doubtful among men, I own, O Lord! that that injustice overwhelms me, I find myself too weak for supporting it, and have then more need than ever of thy help. I acknowledge however, O my God, and my master! that I ought to love thee without measure, and suffer without distinction whatever thou ordainest: that after seeing thee endure, with an invincible patience, the derision of thy eternal truths, the resolution I ought to take, if I am persecuted for virtue, is that of meekness and silence; and without seeking here below, with a vain disquiet, the causes of what afflicts me, my whole occupation ought to be, in discovering thy hand, and adoring thy permissions.

IV. O divine Lamb, O sovereign wisdom! whence is it, that after having taught me such pure maxims, and expressed to me so great an excess of love, thou dost not accomplish thy work in me? Why dost thou let me lead a tepid and languishing life? Why dost thou not inform me entirely into thy love and imitation? Thou hadst, O Lord! very just reasons not to suffer those blasphemies; and yet, that nothing might be wanting in the perfection of thy sacrifice, thou sufferedst them in silence: and as for me, when I desire to enter into myself, I find that my little patience, and extreme delicacy, proceed not only from the infirmity of nature, but from a secret pride, which has already taken too deep root in me. If thy example be incapable of remedying that disorder, there is nothing but thy love that can heal it.

Thou knowest, O divine master of my soul! that the pretexts I seek for withdrawing myself from thy conduct, commonly cause me more pain, than I should have in suffering what thou ordainest: for then I disquiet, trouble, and lose myself; and very far from entertaining christian sentiments, I have not those of a rational man. Let me not fall into this blindness, prevent me by thy mercies, and govern me according to thy good pleasure; since thou knowest what is necessary for me in order to become like thee. Let crosses and tribulations fall upon me from all sides, and in every manner that thou pleasest; as thou art the faithful friend of my soul, I am sure they will come to me from thy love.

Subject

Subject every thing in me therefore to the obedience I owe thee. May I have no longer any other desire than that of pleasing thee, nor any other reason than that of thy will. Restrain my tongue, that I may be silent; curb my thoughts, that I may be recollected in thee; and dilate my heart, that I may follow thee every where, and esteem myself happy in suffering for thee.

When shall I have the same sentiments towards thee, O divine Father of my soul! that thou hast for me? If thou who art my God and supreme master! hast vouchsafed to suffer to such excess for testifying thy love to me; shall I do too much, I who am but a worm of the earth, if I joyfully embrace the occasions wherein I can shew that I love thee? O my Jesus, and my love! place in me for thee what is in thee for me. Since thou lovest me so ardently, inflame me also with thy love. Since thou givest thyself wholly to me, destroy also in me whatever is contrary to thee.

V. I here confess, O Lord! before thy majesty, my extreme blindness. It is true that by thy mercy, I do not blaspheme against thee, as the *Jews* do, who imagine, that if God were thy Father, he would make it appear, by delivering thee from their hands; and that if thy miracles and doctrine were true, thou wouldst convince the world thereof, by descending from the cross. I do not insult thee, as the bad thief does, who believes thee without power, because thou dost not save thyself, and him with thee. But though I have very opposite sentiments, and though I acknowledge thy sovereign power, yet I find my heart full of diffidence and uncertainty in occasions of trial.

When thou assistest me in my necessities, and satisfiest my desires, then I bless thee, O my God! sing thy mercies, and publish thy goodness in remembering me; but if thou beginnest to try me by tribulation, if I am in want of any thing, if thou withdrawest thy sweetness, and if thou leavest me in driness, I become sad, dumb, and languishing; and my voice which echoed before in praises and blessings, sends forth nothing but sighs. So true it is, that I am always like myself; that is, slothful, blind, miserable, naked, and destitute of all good. Illuminate me therefore, O divine light! dissipate in me all these false opinions; teach me to praise thee, love thee, and acknowledge thee equally in labour and rest, in prosperity and adversity, on *Calvary* and *Thabor*; for thou art every where the same, always a charitable Father, a faithful friend, and a liberal benefactor.

When

When we behold a public thief suffering near thee, with so perfect a resignation, the punishment he has incurred by his crimes, thy power appears no less, than if thou deliveredst him from the cross. When thou movedst the centurion to confess aloud that thou art the Son of God, and the other spectators of thy death to return home, striking their breasts, thou shewest no less who thou art, than if thou didst resist all the endeavours of thy enemies. Thy divine power is manifested still more in thy empire over hearts, than in the empire thou exercisest over bodies. For that reason, O Lord! it is thou permittest falsehood to triumph, in the eyes of an ignorant people, over thy holy truths, the knowledge of which thou reservest to the experience of love.

VI. O heavenly fire! that piercest the clouds wherewith they endeavour to darken thy splendor; and that burnest in the hearts of the saints under the ashes of tribulation. O divine Jesus! how well does pure love acknowledge thee for the true Son of God, upon the cross, whereon thou art nailed, and through the reproaches wherewith thou art covered! It not only believes and confesses thee, but it also inspires a faithful heart with the desire of being crucified with thee.

Who can express, O my God! the wonders which thy cross operates in a soul that is empty and disengaged from the creature? What light does it diffuse therein? what secrets does it communicate to it? with what riches does it fill it? Thou re-establishest in three days according to thy promise, the temple of thy most sacred body, destroyed by the punishment of the cross; and in one moment thou raisest up the hearts of thy servants oppressed by the cross, in order to make them the living temples of thy glory. Thou savest them by crucifying them, comfortest them by tormenting them, and purifiest them by distressing them; and what in appearance ought to destroy them, changes them, renews them, and enriches them.

O God of my heart! how great glory is hidden under thy reproaches! what freedom does the enlightened soul find in thy chains, what rest in thy labours, and what sweetness in thy cross! How weak and powerful, great and humble, amiable and afflicted, art thou at the same time? *Thou art truly an unknown God*, and if those that encompass thee love thee not, it is because they know thee not. O infinite love, pure love, and sincere love! since thou burnest for me, why dost thou not also burn in me? What wouldst thou have of me, O divine love! when thou sufferest so much for me, and callest me so often to thee? Here I am, wholly ready to obey thee, perform thy work in me, change me, transform me, and

and consume me, O Eternal love, Omnipotent love! which canst do whatever thou wilt, and canst not be overcome by all thou sufferest.

O most pure Virgin! obtain me that affliction of love wherewith your heart is wounded. Far from weakening your virtue, it supports your life, and makes you remain, with such great constancy, at the foot of your Son's Cross. Ye Saints of Heaven! who live on love, refuse me not your intercessions; love that Divine Jesus for me, that I may die in his love, and may continue to love him with you for all eternity. *Amen.*

XLVI. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

Judas and the bad thief's impenitence.

HATRED, fear, sorrow, and joy arise from love: for we hate every thing that is contrary to the object we love, fear to lose it, are sorry for having lost it, and are glad in the possession of it. He that knows how much Christ loves sinners, what he has done for testifying his love to them, and what he suffered to save them, may easily comprehend how far that charitable shepherd was sensible of fear for being the occasion of the spiritual ruin of many, of joy for the salvation of others, and of sorrow for the loss of others.

It cannot be doubted but one of the greatest torments of his passion was the sight of those children of *Adam* that were to perish, by their own fault in not making use of the salutary remedies which were prepared for them with so much labour and expence. But he was particularly sensible of the loss of those who were the ministers of his death, for whom, and in whose sight he shed his precious blood: for he could not behold without a most lively sorrow, that those unhappy persons should damn themselves, by the very things which he suffered for saving them.

It was, without doubt, to express the pain of his Paternal heart, that he said by the prophet *Isaiab*, i. 24. these very surprising words: *alas, I will comfort myself upon my adversaries; and will be revenged of my enemies.* That is, since by their own fault they have not profited

profited by my blood and mercy, my only consolation shall therefore be in abandoning them to my justice.

II. But since Christ was so deeply concerned at the loss of all the reprobate, how much more was he so at the damnation of those whom he had tenderly loved, and to whom he had offered such favourable occasions for saving themselves! Such were the traitor *Judas* and the bad thief; one fate at our Saviour's table, and the other was his companion on the Cross.

It cannot be denied but *Judas* received, as well as the other apostles, most abundant graces of salvation, not only for himself, but also for many others whom he ought to have saved with him. For Christ had withdrawn him from the world, to place him in the number of his chosen disciples, with whom he entrusted his most secret thoughts, whom he instructed with a particular care, who were his inseparable companions in labour and rest. How many admirable examples of the most heroic virtues did that perfidious apostle behold in the conduct of his Divine Master! How many words of eternal life did he hear from his sacred mouth! How many times did he taste, in a most holy familiarity, such sweetneses as were capable of converting devils! He received from him the power of working miracles, and even wrought many. He often freed the possessed in the name of Jesus Christ; and all those singular graces, and those most sensible proofs of our Saviour's power, did not extinguish in that unhappy wretch, the spirit of avarice, which induced him to sell his Master.

III. That charitable Master did not in that moment abandon his perfidious disciple. He made use of most powerful graces, in order to withdraw him from so black a perfidy. He gave him his sacred body to eat, and his precious blood to drink, at his last supper. He communicated to him the power of remitting sins, and of sacrificing the spotless Lamb, according to the testimony of *St. Augustin* and *St. Leo*. He washed his feet, and added also to those exterior marks of goodness, many interior motions. But seeing nothing softened the hardness of that impenitent heart, he at last declared to his apostles that one of them was to betray him, and that it were better for him that was to betray him if he had never been born.

That miserable wretch was not moved, either by the caresses, or threats of our Saviour, who vouchsafed to receive a kiss from him in the garden of *Olives*, and upbraided him, for the last time, with his perfidy, in words capable of softening the savagest heart in the world.

world. *Friend*, said he to him, *what art thou come for? Is it with a kiss thou betrayest the Son of man?* This last stroke, which was so lively and penetrating, was also unprofitable.

But when *Judas* saw that *Jesus* was condemned, and that the *Jews* would not take back the money wherewith they had paid for his treason; instead of having recourse to the clemency of him whom he had betrayed, he hanged himself out of despair, and gave up his miserable soul into the hands of the devils. Thus it is that this Divine Master, who forces not the wills which he has created free, had the sorrow to see a disciple perish whom he had prevented with a thousand favours, and who had never wanted the necessary helps for saving himself.

IV. *Christ*, as it were to repair that loss, seeing that one of the thieves who were crucified with him implored his mercy, promised him paradise immediately, and testified thereby how much joy the sincere return of a sinner gave him. It is with difficulty he condemns sinners, when he sees them obstinate in their ruin, and always pardons those with pleasure who have recourse to his goodness. The very inclination he has to pardon, is a certain proof of the sorrow he feels when he is obliged to punish.

Thus the thief crucified at *Christ's* left hand, having the same opportunity as the other of obtaining pardon for his crimes, and being capable as well as he of being washed with the blood which was shed for all sinners; it cannot be doubted but that our Saviour was most sensibly affected at so obstinate an obduracy. For that miserable person had heard *Christ* beg with a loud voice mercy for sinners of his Eternal Father. He had seen in him a patience more than human, a silence and meekness proof against all kind of affronts and blasphemies. He had seen the eclipse of the sun, the earthquake, and the repentance of his companion, who openly confessed his sin, accepted with an humble submission to the Divine Justice the punishment of the cross, acknowledged the Innocence and Royalty of *Christ*, by saying to him, *Lord, be mindful of me, when thou shalt come into thy Kingdom*, Luke xxiii. 42. In fine, he was witness to the promise our Saviour made to that penitent thief, of putting him that very day in possession of paradise; and without being touched with that example, in the sight of *Christ's* blood which flowed abundantly, and under the shadow of the tree of life, he died in his sin.

The Son of God, as a just Judge, condemned him then; but as the Redeemer, a Father, a faithful Friend, and a charitable Shepherd, he could not behold without an extreme sorrow that
unhappy

unhappy sheep perish through his own obstinacy, at the very fountain of salvation. Thus our Saviour's torments, though very great and sensible, were still much augmented by the interior anguish which his love for sinners occasioned him.

V. We learn here a most important truth, but of infinite consolation to us. Which is, that Christ desires our salvation more earnestly, and has a deeper sense of our loss, than we can ever either have a desire of the one, or be sensible of the other; that he has at all times and in every hour, his arms open to receive repenting sinners; and that he offers the treasures of his graces to all those that are willing to receive them. We clearly see it in the conduct he observes in regard of the good thief, whom he was pleased to save the first of all men, by the confession of the true faith, and by the motion of a sincere charity. For in him the Son of God has given us a certain assurance, that the same place wherein that converted thief entered first, is open to all sinners.

But it is true that this assurance which is so certain on God's part, becomes doubtful by the example of *Judas* and the bad thief: for if there be any places at all, where salvation seems secure, it is in Heaven among the angels, on earth among the apostles, and in death suffered at Christ's side; and yet the angels were not sure of their salvation in Heaven, from whence many fell; nor *Judas* in the apostolical state, where he was lost; nor the bad thief in the company of Jesus crucified, where he found his condemnation. No grace of Christ saves a free creature, unless that creature co-operates freely, and uses the means of salvation which Christ offers it; but he who, forgetting himself, abandons himself to his irregular appetites, may be assured of his ruin; and the graces he receives from God, will only serve to render him more guilty.

St. *Gregory* relates, in the fourth book of his dialogues, the terrible example of a man, who dying in his sin, found himself damned for ever; and being raised up to life again, by a miracle of the Divine Mercy, led afterwards so disorderly a life, that dying a second time, he returned again into the eternal misery from which God had taken him.

Christ in the gospel requires the servant, to whom he entrusts his talents, to improve them, under pain of being condemned to exterior darkness; to teach us that he who makes not a good use of God's graces, ought not to hope for any share in his kingdom. The humble servant, that takes care of his soul, lives in the fear of God, is faithful to his grace, and, always taken up with the thoughts
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and desires of pleasing him, unites himself to him by love, is he alone that secures his eternal salvation.

VI. That our confidence in the goodness of God, may not make us neglect our duties, as it happens but too often; and that no one may depend upon his last hour, by assuring himself that the grace of a true repentance will not be wanting to him at that time; let us remember what St. *Augustin* teaches, speaking of the conversion of the good thief. "It is certain, says that Father, that he who at the last moment of his life, turns to God with his whole heart, shall receive mercy; but it is very uncertain whether he who has spent his life in the forgetfulness of God, and has neglected so many graces of his salvation, will be sincerely converted amidst the pains of sickness, and the terrors of death. For that reason it is that God, having proposed to us many examples in the holy scriptures of sinners converted during the course of their life, points out but one single man, who is the good thief, converted at the hour of death; that none of us may promise ourselves a like happiness, out of a presumptuous confidence."

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ in the sorrow he felt on the loss of Judas, and the bad thief.

HOW admirable is thy goodness, O divine Jesus! What charms has thy meekness for sinners! Thy looks convert souls, thy words soften obduracy, thy conversation reclaims them from error, and thy company unites them to thee by the bonds of an agreeable captivity. Thou art always amiable, always faithful, and always generous. Thou sacrificest thyself entirely for our salvation, and sparest thyself in nothing, for testifying thy love to us, and for gaining ours. Thou sanctifiedst *Magdalen* the sinner at thy feet, *Zaccheus* by entering into his house, *Matthew* by calling him to thee, *Paul* by reproaching him for his unjust persecution, and *Peter* by looking upon him.

Thou didst eat with sinners, soughtest them with earnestness, receivedst them with mercy, defendedst them with goodness, and enrichedst them with magnificence. Thou justifiedst the publican, and pardonedst the thief. Thou hast left no sinner without a remedy; and all those that perish ought to attribute their ruin only to the obstinacy of their own will. Thou hast taken more care of
their

their salvation, than of thy own honour and life. Thou deliveredst thyself up for them, weepedst for their evils, expiatedst their sins, sufferedst the punishments which they had deserved, and shewedst on all occasions how sensible thy heart was of the miseries they brought upon themselves.

II. Since all those that are lost occasion thee so lively a sorrow, what must that be thou felt at seeing *Judas* perish in thy company, and the thief at thy side? None but he that loves thee, O my God! can comprehend what the bitterness of thy soul was then; because he alone knows the extent of thy love. Those two sinners were near thee, under thy hand, and as it were in thy nets. Thou wast entirely ready to take them from the devil; but they ruined themselves, and their obstinacy and ruin was more sensible to thee than thy cross. Was it still necessary to add that pain to all those thou sufferedst?

May thy divine love, which can forget nothing for the salvation of sinners, be eternally blessed, O my God and Redeemer! Even when *Judas* was selling thee, thou didst consecrate him; thou madest him a priest of the sacrifice whereof thou art the victim; gavest him thy body to eat, and thy blood to drink; washedst his feet; spokest to his heart; sufferedst him to embrace thee; treatedst him as a friend when he was a traitor; madest use of every thing for gaining him, of love, fear, sweetness, severity, caresses, and threats; and didst go to suffer for him with a heart full of tenderness, though thou knewest thy sufferings would be unprofitable for him. Thus that unhappy disciple was lost, because he would be so; and by ruining himself he left thee with thy soul pierced with grief.

III. Thy love began to feel comfort, when thou beheldest a penitent thief at thy right hand, and immediately promisedst him the possession of thy kingdom; but the obstinacy of the other presently renewed thy sorrow. O divine love! that art never blind, though thou art excessive in regard of sinners; dost thou then thus forget thy own torments, that thou mayest only be sensible of our ills? O insatiable fire! O paternal bowels! O true, pure, sincere, generous, nay prodigal friendship! O Jesus, so severe to thyself and so charitable to sinners! is it possible that I should not love thee with my whole heart? How can I spend one single moment of my life without loving and serving thee? O that I could be wholly busied with thee, as thou art wholly busied with me! When shall I see that happy time? shall it be always delayed, and shall I never be wholly thine? Make haste, O my God! to inflame me with thy love, and to re-unite in thee alone all the thoughts of my mind,
and

and all the desires of my heart: this is what thou desirest of me, O Lord! but it is what I cannot attain to without thy help.

Content thyself with the pains I have occasioned thee by my disorderly life, and do not augment them by the loss of my soul. At this moment I resign myself for ever to thy will, receive me into the number of thy children, crucify me with thee in time, and permit me not to be separated from thee in eternity.

IV. O King of glory! O master of heaven! O shepherd of my soul! behold here another thief whom I present to thee, to comfort thee for the loss thou hast lately had. I am this thief, O my God! thou knowest I am no less guilty than he whom thou seest perish at thy left hand, nor less worthy than he of the punishment he endures. I have squandered away the talents of nature and grace which thou hadst entrusted me with; and instead of improving them in thy service, I have abused them in offending thee. I have a thousand times stolen thy glory by my pride and vanity, in attributing to my labour, care, and merit, what I owed to thy grace and mercy. I have frequently sinned against justice, by preferring the illusions of the world and the flesh to thy holy truths, and allowing myself to be corrupted by the sollicitations of my self-love. Alas! my life has scarce been any thing else but a series of actions worthy of death.

How many times mightest thou have destroyed me, O my God! by very justly delivering me up to the power of devils, and to the punishments of hell? but by thy infinite mercy thou hast always borne with me, and hast expected me till now with an ineffable patience; thou knowest how greatly I have abused it, and art not wearied with so long a delay. But in fine, now is the hour wherein I am to return to thee; receive this sinner more criminal than those that are crucified with thee. Give me the cross whereon thou art blasphemed, that its virtue may not be lost; thou hast sanctified that cross by thy virtue, it is reserved for me. Grant, O Lord! that I may be fastened thereto, and indemnify thyself by me for the loss of that impenitent thief.

I acknowledge, with the good thief, that thou art the king and lord of Heaven; that thou canst give me it this day if thou wilt; and that thou never refusest it to those, who return to thee with a sincere sorrow for having offended thee. Upon the same cross, where I behold thee covered with blood and wounds, I acknowledge thee for my God, my Saviour, and the only Son of the eternal Father, I am persuaded that whatever thou ordaineest me to suffer for my sins, is far less than what they deserve. But thou, O innocent

lamb! sufferest unjustly: for thou never didst any evil, and thou art the source of all good.

V. Remember me, O my Saviour! when thou shalt be in thy kingdom, and give me at present the place which the bad thief possesses so impatiently; that having been a companion of thy cross, I may enter one day with thee into thy glory. For I dare not ask thee, O Lord! to grant me that favour this day, as thou didst to the good thief; I know too well how unworthy I am thereof; I only beg of thee to nail me this day to the cross, and leave me thereon as long as thou pleasest. It is true nothing is nearer heaven than the cross, that it is the surest pledge of glory, the channel of thy mercies, and the throne of thy love: but after all, it is the way I ought to follow, and the end I ought to aspire to; and it would not be reasonable to desire to attain the end, without walking in the way which leads thereto.

I beg of thee therefore, O Lord! not the recompence which I have not deserved, but the labour which is necessary for my deserving it; in a word, the cross and thy grace. This is all I desire at present: for my happiness in this life is to abide, near thee, O my Jesus! who art the paradise of crucified souls. There it is I shall find the assurance of thy kingdom, and the pardon of my sins; that I shall become like thee; that thou wilt give me thy love; that I shall closely embrace thee, live for thee, renounce for thee every thing that is not thee, and die sweetly in thee, in order to reign gloriously with thee.

O Mother of God! refuge and advocate of sinners, you who have comprehended better than any one, how many tears the loss of souls cost your divine Son, because you loved him more than any creature ever did; you see that his love towards men is not diminished; that it is, and always will be the same; refuse not your protection to this sinner invoking you; obtain me the place of that obdurate sinner, and the grace of persevering therein, with a loving submission, on till my last breath. And you happy thief who interest this sinner in your last breath. And you happy thief who arrived the day in to paradise, remember your likeness when you are he love me, and assist me in meriting the cross which saved you, Amen. which sanctified you, and the glory which crowned you.

XLVII. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

His sorrow in seeing the affliction of his Blessed Mother.

THE most Blessed Virgin had so much concern in our salvation, and in the sufferings of her Son, that we cannot here dispense with ourselves, without an extreme ingratitude, in speaking of the new pains of that afflicted mother. Her grief was to see her Son, whom she loved much more than her own life, plunged in a sea of torments and ignominies; and our Saviour was also most deeply sensible of the point of that sword of sorrow, wherewith he beheld the heart of his most holy mother transfixed at the foot of the cross. As she had always been the perfect imitatrix of that well-beloved Son's heroic virtues, she would also resemble him in the manner of suffering; but she had interiorly a most severe combat to maintain: for she was urged on one side by the tenderness she had for her Son, and on the other by the submission she owed to the order of God, and by the desire of the salvation of men. Her charity for sinners, whose advocate she already was, desired that they should have a remedy capable of healing their evils; and the motherly love she bore to her Son, to whom that remedy was to cost so dear, could not think of it without horror; her heart thus rent found no relief, but in an universal resignation to the will of God.

II. The saints that have applied themselves most to the meditation of Christ's sufferings, have thought, either by a pious conjecture, or by an extraordinary light, that our divine Saviour beholding the time of his passion, approaching, to satisfy his love and obedience towards his blessed Mother, went to take leave of her, desired her consent for accomplishing of our redemption, and declared to her that it was the will of the eternal Father, that she should remain at the foot of the cross, see her Son expire thereon in the midst of torments, and receive that crucified body in her arms; and when it was taken down from the cross, that she should bury it with her own hands. He shewed her afterwards what she was to do, and where she should remain till he rose again; in fine, he recommended his disciples to her, and the rest of the faithful. Not but that he had already told her before what he was to suffer for our salvation; but in that moment he discovered to her the whole series of his passion, that she might accompany him in spirit, in the places where he should suffer.

It is probable that this interview was not spent in a long discourse, and that the eyes and heart had a greater share than the mouth in the communication they then made of their sentiments; but however in such a manner, that the least weakness that could any way diminish the perfection of their obedience and conformity to the divine will, did not insinuate itself into the tenderness they expressed to each other. For Christ, as the Son of man, was naturally touched with the state of his blessed mother; but because he was God, he inspired her with all the fortitude she had need of in so great an affliction, and comforted her by most divine words, which that humble handmaid carefully *laid up in her heart.*

It is easy to imagine here how happy she would have esteemed herself, could she have been crucified in her son's stead, if it had been proper; and that she would much rather have died herself than see him suffer. But because God had ordained it otherwise, she offered at least the sacrifice of her heart, whilst Jesus sacrificed his body and life upon the cross.

III. While our Saviour was going to death, the Blessed Virgin followed him in spirit, plunged in a sea of sorrows, suffering a mortal grief, and a kind of agony; but yet always submissive to the divine will. Thus it was she entered into her Son's interior disposition, when he sweat blood and water in the garden of *Olives*, without losing any of that submission she had to the orders of the eternal Father. She persevered in that sorrowful prayer, till the time she was informed her Son was in the hands of sinners. For when he was taken, and that the *Jews*, after having shut him up in a prison, were gone home to take a little rest, *St. John* came to give the Blessed Virgin an account of what had happened; telling her that our Saviour was already condemned to death by the *Jews*, and that he was to be led to *Pilate* in the morning, that that *Roman* magistrate might confirm their sentence.

It is easier to meditate in silence, what the conversation of the Blessed Virgin and the beloved disciple was then, than to express it by words. What may be mentioned here as most certain, is that she did not give way to any of those irregular motions so common to afflicted women; and though she felt within herself an incredible sorrow, she let nothing appear outwardly that might offend the severest moderation and decency.

IV. She departed from her house at sun-rise, to go in quest of her Son, and to follow him to the cross. She went silently through the streets of *Jerusalem*, sprinkling the way with her tears, and filling the air with her sighs. Some pious women, followers of Christ, joined

joined her; and after walking some time, they met our Saviour, whom the *Jews* were leading to *Herod*; but the crowd was so great, that they could not see him; they only heard the vociferations of those that abused him, and vomited out a thousand blasphemies against him.

That divine lamb on his part finding himself in the midst of wolves, would have been glad to have seen his blessed mother; for it is common to persons who love, to have more lively feelings of their friends absence, when they are in affliction, and to desire their presence, though it must be to them an encrease of pain. But the Blessed Virgin could not see her Son till he was shewn to the people by *Pilate*; and then she beheld him bloody, quite covered with wounds, and entirely disfigured, cloathed with a ridiculous garment, having a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand. Jesus knew she was present at this sight, saw the bottom of that afflicted heart, and felt his mother's pain no less, than the points of his own thorns.

Besides, that afflicted mother was not only tormented by the sight of an object capable of killing her, she also heard the false testimonies wherewith they wounded her Son's reputation, the maledictions they uttered against him, the outcries of those that required a thief and murderer to be preferred to that innocent lamb, and the author of life to be crucified. She heard the herald's voice that proclaimed the sentence of death which *Pilate* had pronounced; afterwards she beheld that great cross elevated, which our Saviour was to carry himself in order to be nailed thereon; and when he began to walk, she joined his retinue, shedding as many tears, as he shed drops of blood; and interiorly oppressed with a cross of grief, which was no less heavy than that she beheld upon her Son's shoulders.

V. But when she was arrived at the top of mount *Calvary*, with the pious women that had followed our Saviour, when she had a near sight of the whole apparatus of that punishment, which was so cruel and so shameful at the same time, when she heard the strokes of the hammers wherewith they drove the nails through the feet and hands of her only Son, when he appeared on the cross, and she came to consider that excess of pains, which motherly love represented to her in particular, being already weakened by the sorrowful night she had spent, the little or no nourishment she had taken, the tears she had shed, and besides being a woman, a mother, and consequently more tenderly sensible, unable to surmount the sense of nature, or to support the greatness of her pain, she fainted away in the arms of those that accompanied her; which often happens in extraordinary sorrows, even to the most robust and courageous.

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Then her tears being dried up, she remained some time pale and trembling; and afterwards coming to herself, not by any human assistance, but by a secret power which her divine son communicated to her, that she might suffer still more, and recovering all her strength, she arose, forced her way through the crowd with St. *John* and the women that had followed her, and got to the cross: there standing, and fixing her eyes upon our Saviour, she performed the office of our advocate, offering interiorly to the eternal Father the pains and blood of their mutual Son, with an earnest desire of the salvation of all men. She was afraid to see him die, and she suffered in seeing him live in torments, which were only to end by death. She wished that the eternal Father would be less rigorous, and yet she was willing that the orders of heaven should be accomplished in their full extent,

That divine lamb and that innocent sheep beheld and understood one another mutually; they were tormented by the pains of each other; and those pains were such, that one may say, the more we consider them, the less we comprehend them. None but the two hearts of the Mother and Son can conceive the whole of their sufferings; because the measure of their pain being that of their love, to know what they suffered, we must know how much they loved: because we are very far from their love. Let us endeavour therefore rather to enter into their sentiments, each of us according to the degree of our light and charity, than to express them here by our weak words.

But though it seems nothing could be added to the blessed Virgin's desolation, yet her heart being full of affliction, still received from time to time new shocks by the new circumstances of her Son's passion; as when she heard him say so amiably to his Father: *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* When she saw the *Jews* present him gall and vinegar for quenching the burning thirst whereof he complained; when he sent forth that loud cry wherewith he expired; when she received him dead in her arms at his being taken down from the cross; when he was buried; and when she saw herself deprived of the presence of her well-beloved, whose resurrection she expected so earnestly, that those three days seemed to her three years.

VI. We see in the true imitators of Christ, who are arrived at the state of pure love, an admirable effect of that perfect charity; they love and take pleasure in their own sufferings, whilst they bear with sorrow those of their neighbour, so far as to wish to suffer them also, rather than to see others suffer them. Our Saviour has given us in the whole course of his life, but chiefly at the time of his passion,

most clear marks of his disinterested charity: for he was less sensible of the torments he endured by *Judas's* treachery, than of the damnation of that ungrateful and perfidious apostle. He declared to the daughters of *Jerusalem* who wept bitterly, when they saw him led to *Calvary*, that he was more afflicted at the miseries where-with they were threatened, than with his own punishment. When he was elevated on the cross, as if he had forgot his own torments, his first care was to beg pardon for those that had crucified him; which clearly shews that his love gave him a deeper sense of the miseries of his creatures than of his own.

Therefore it must not be doubted but the pains of his holy mother, whom he beheld at the foot of the cross, were more severe to him than the cross itself. For that most pure virgin was worthier of his love than all the angels of heaven, and all the men on earth, and consequently she was loved more. As also no mother ever loved her son so earnestly and so tenderly: for she had been the faithful companion of his labours, was holy, innocent, and deserved not to suffer any pain, because she had never been defiled with any sin; and yet she was the most afflicted of all mothers that were before, or came after her. Let us imagine, if we can, what pain it was for such a mother, to see such a Son expire in the midst of so many torments and reproaches. So severe a cross was reserved for her alone, because she alone was capable of bearing it. It is true our Saviour, out of the respect he had for his mother, permitted not the executioners to ill-treat her; but the love she bore her Son tormented her much more than all the executioners could have done.

VII. Our Saviour from the cross saw that his pains pierced the heart of his most blessed mother, he knew all she suffered then, and all she was to suffer afterwards, for accomplishing the eternal Father's designs. Those views were a new torment to the tender heart of *Jesus*, and his Father had ordained it so for completing the sufferings of the sacred Humanity, and that nothing might be added to the extent of that sacrifice. This made several holy personages think, that this was the reason why Christ being on the cross, and speaking to the blessed Virgin, did not call her his mother, for fear so dear a name might bring them both some comfort in their pains: but only said *woman, behold thy son*: for on the one hand, he would have his mother suffer without consolation, and to drink as well as himself the most pure but bitter cup; but on the other, he would not abandon her; and thus in regard of her he kept a medium between weakness and severity.

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He took care of her, spoke to her, gave her the disciple he loved for a son, and said to that disciple, *behold thy mother*: as St. *John* there represented all men, our Saviour commanded us all, in the person of his disciple, to honour and serve the blessed Virgin as our mother. St. *John* received, with an extreme gratitude, such sensible marks of the goodness of Christ; and did not think that that dear master could leave him at his death a more precious inheritance.

VIII. It was nevertheless a great consolation for that afflicted Mother, still to hear the voice of her only Son. She knew that by adopting a second son, she ceased not to be the mother of the first, whom she regarded as her creator and God. *Jesus* and *Mary* mutually understood one another; betwixt those two most pure hearts there was a secret communication, and they penetrated the sentiments of each other: thus the holy Virgin accepted of St. *John* in such a manner for her son, that she accepted of all men at the same time for her children; because she clearly saw that it was the will of Christ; and that men, after having treated him so unworthily, would never presume to return to him, if he had not given them his own Mother for a mediatrix.

She entered into all her Son's intentions, assumed the heart of a mother for sinners, and regarded them as the children of sorrow, whom she had brought forth at the foot of the cross. Thus that sea of torments, wherein *Jesus* and *Mary* were plunged, is become for sinners a river of peace, and a fountain of blessings. Let us therefore have our eyes continually fixed on those models of perfection, let us consecrate to their service the remainder of our life, let us endeavour to follow the steps they have pointed out to us, and let us be persuaded, that in order to be agreeable to God, we must become like *Jesus* and *Mary*.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ, in the pain which his blessed Mother's desolation occasioned him.

SWEET *Jesus*! innocent lamb! thy torments are without measure; thou not only feelest thy own, but also those of thy blessed Mother. O pure hearts! hearts full of grace, hearts inflamed with love, hearts so united and afflicted, associate me to
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the participation of your sufferings, and make me feel those of the Son and of the Mother. You deeply felt, O most blessed Virgin! the immense pains of your only Son, because you are the tenderest of all mothers. Thou hadst a lively feeling, O divine Jesus! of the interior torments of thy holy Mother, because thou art the most grateful and generous of all sons. Methinks I behold you both, O most innocent lamb! O most pure sheep! amorously bewailing each other, and feeling each others pain without any consolation: the purer your pain is, the more bitter it is. O inhuman hearts of men, obdurate hearts, hearts more insensible than the rocks! Why are ye not rent with grief? Why do not ye melt in tears, at seeing ye are the cause of all these torments? What has this divine Saviour done to suffer such great evils? What has this most holy Virgin done to feel such great sufferings on that account?

Is it not thou, O abominable sinner! that art become by thy crimes the executioner of those two most pure and innocent hearts? O hearts full of justice and goodness! I can no longer bear the reproach of having reduced you into this state: either pardon me, or take revenge on me. Since all creatures obey thee, O Jesus! command them to punish me; send me thy pains, and those of thy blessed Mother; it is reasonable I should suffer them all, since I have been the cause of them all; but at least let me help you to suffer them, and take a share in them with you. O Jesus! thou love of my soul! O Mary! my hope and refuge! take from me the pleasures of life; and since yours were entirely spent in pain, permit me not to finish mine without having tasted the salutary bitterness of the cross: for *I am thy servant, O Lord! and the son of thy hand-maid.*

II. Whence comes it, O blessed Virgin! that your joys are turned into sorrows? If your joys had been like those of the world, that change would be reasonable; but you never tasted any but most heavenly joys. *God possessed you from the beginning of your joys;* and you never loved any thing but what came from him, or, what might lead you to him. You had joy in being the Mother of God, and full of God; in bringing forth your only Son, in holding him in your arms, in nourishing him with your milk, and in seeing him adored by shepherds, kings, and angels; and acknowledged by *Simeon* and *Anna* for the Saviour of mankind. During the thirty years you lived with him, all your pleasures were interior, divine, and spiritual; and your most pure soul, amidst the transports and raptures which the love of Jesus your Son and God occasioned you, was always elevated and transformed into him. Was there any thing in these sweetnesses that deserved to be changed into bitterness? Ought you to have had any share in our miseries,

miserics, which are the inheritance of the unhappy children of *Adam*, you who had no share in his sin; and ought this land which we inhabit to have been to you a valley of tears?

Blind and foolish sinner, thou seest the queen of angels drowned in a sea of sorrows, and thinkest thou on nothing but procuring thyself delights? Blush at thy delicacy in the presence of *Jesus* and *Mary*; weep for the time thou hast lost in pleasures, and for the bad use thou hast made of thy sufferings. *Jesus* the only Son of God dies in torments; *Mary* his most blessed Mother has her heart pierced with a sword of sorrow; and thou, O sinner! who hast deserved hell, seekest pleasures and consolations on earth.

III. Whilst you lived with your Son, O most pure Virgin! you always expected that sorrowful sword which the holy old man *Simeon* had foretold you in the temple; you now see his prediction accomplished; and your pains are extreme, because they are proportionate to the greatness of your love. Your well-beloved Son finding that his hour approached, and that he was going to be delivered up to sinners, comes to bid you adieu, and to declare to you at the same time, that it is the divine will you should see him suffer and die on the cross. St. *John* acquaints you that *Jesus* is apprehended, and that they are dragging him before the judges: you immediately go out of your house, run through the streets of *Jerusalem*, watering them with your tears, and find the Lamb of God in the midst of those hungry wolves.

You see him afterwards, no longer adored by angels and kings, but exposed to the laughter of the people as a mock king, loaded with injuries and maledictions, and at last condemned to the cross. He carries it upon his shoulders, and you follow him to *Calvary*: there you behold the apparatus of his punishment; you hear the strokes of the hammer which drives the large nails into his feet and hands, and pierces your heart at the same time. You behold him elevated on the cross, and that sight tears your bowels, and freezes the blood in your veins. You remain standing at the foot of the cross, and there spend the cruel moments, till your Son expires. You receive him into your arms when they take him from the cross, you wrap him in a winding-sheet, perform the same duties towards him after his death as you performed at his birth, and perform them towards him with the same love; but with very different sentiments: for you then swam in joys, and now you are drowned in sorrows.

Nevertheless your virtue supports you; your faith, love, and submission to the orders of God, abandon you not on this occasion;
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every thing afflicts you, and nothing dejects you. *Great is your affliction as the sea*; and you stand at the foot of the cross. To know what passes in your soul, O most holy Virgin! we must comprehend how much you love your son, and what he suffers: for his torments and your love are the measure of your compassion.

IV. When your faithful servants and true friends consider your pains, O queen of heaven! they melt in tears; and there is nothing but what they would suffer, if their sufferings were capable of comforting you. What then are the sentiments of your only Son, who always loved you so tenderly? What does he not suffer in seeing the anguish of your heart, and the deep silence you observe? You are by him, and speak not to him. But what still augments his pain is, that he cannot dispense with himself in suffering what afflicts you, and that you cannot see him afflicted without suffering.

O eternal Father! O God of all consolation! Why dost thou not give some of it to those desolate hearts? Why dost thou crucify them so? Why dost thou not assist thy only Son and thy faithful handmaid? Why dost thou violate thy own law, which forbids to *sacrifice the lamb with its mother*? For the same nails which fasten Jesus to the cross, pierce the heart of *Mary*. Hast thou more care of animals that can neither know nor love thee, than of thy dearest friends? It was not lawful formerly to kill a sheep on the same day that its lamb had been taken from it; and thou sacrificest on the same day both the Son and the Mother. It is thou, O eternal Father! that condemnest them to so cruel a punishment; the love they have for one another is the executioner of thy sentence; and that nothing may be wanting to their pain, they are tormented in the sight of each other. Blessed for ever, O my God! be the excess of thy mercy towards sinners. I am not weary in praising, adoring, and glorifying thee; and I wish I could spend myself in thanksgivings, when I consider the admirable works of thy infinite love.

V. O Son of the living God! O divine light of my soul! I conjure thee by the love wherewith thou lovest me, to imprint those sublime truths in my heart, to banish from thence the desire of human consolations, to confirm me in thy love, and to fortify the will I have to suffer in order to testify my love to thee. If thy own advantage was no ground for thee of suffering, if what ought to have been thy consolation augmented thy pain, if thy blessed Mother was thy torment, as thou wast hers; am I not very blind to seek glory, pleasure, and support in things that surround me? Where shall I go, by following another way than that thou hast pointed out to me? Shall I still remain long in this illusion I am
in?

in? Shall I yet fly from thee long, O Jesus, my love and my wisdom! Shall this earthly man never begin to express in himself what he so clearly beholds in thee?

How can I see thee die on the cross for me, and still be in love with life, unless it be to spend it with thee; as thy blessed Mother did? Ought not the light which comes from thy cross to dispel all my darkness, and to undeceive me for ever concerning the false maxims I have followed! Rise upon me, O divine light! illuminate my mind, warm my heart, guide my steps, and govern all my powers; I resign myself to thee; grant, O Lord! that this resignation may be pure, sincere, and without reserve; grant that I may love thy sufferings, and imitate thee in mine; grant, in fine, that all my consolation in this world may be in loving thee, and in suffering for thee.

VI. What shall I render thee, O God of my heart! for all the benefits thou hast granted me! How shall I acknowledge the admirable inventions of thy love? Thou turnest every thing to my advantage. Even the grief thou hast in seeing thy blessed Mother upon the point of losing her Son, becomes for me a source of blessings. Thou givest me this holy Virgin for a mother and mistress, substitutest me in thy place, and requirest me to be the Son of thy Mother, that she may assist me, protect me, and compassionate me in my miseries, as she had compassion on thee in thy pains. Couldst thou not comfort that afflicted Mother, but by giving her children of wrath? What are we towards making up the loss she has sustained in losing thee? Ah, Lord! how exalted are thy views above ours; but how full of goodness are they for us! It is because *Mary* is the mother of our Saviour, that she is to be that of sinners. If we are not miserable children, how should she be a mother of mercy?

Be thou blessed, O my amiable Redeemer! at all times, in all places, and by all creatures. Nothing escapes thy affection. All the circumstances of thy Passion are treasures of graces for men, and no evil befalls thee but from which thy wisdom draws some good for the salvation and comfort of thy servants. Permit me not, O my Saviour! to be without a remedy in the midst of so many remedies; receive me to thee, and regard me always as *thy servant and the son of thy handmaid*.

O most holy Mother of God! remember that though you brought forth your only Son without pain in the stable of *Bethlehem*, you have brought forth children at the foot of the cross with incredible pains, assist me, protect me, since I have cost you so dear; have always in regard of me the bowels of a mother, and let not your unworthy son perish. And ye citizens of the heavenly *Jerusalem*,

salem, who are the beloved children of that amiable Mother, pray for her unnatural children, that they may return to her, and by her to Jesus, with whom ye reign for all ages. *Amen.*

XLVIII. SUFFERING of CHRIST.

He is forsaken by God his Father.

IT is a great consolation for an afflicted person, to have faithful and assisting friends that compassionate him in his sufferings, and hinder him from thinking thereon; but to be overwhelmed with misfortunes, to see nothing around him but what augments the sense thereof, and to find himself without support both within and without, is what may with reason be called the height of misery. The faithful servants of God almost all undergo this trial; because nothing is more capable of purifying them: but as it is extremely severe, God, who always spares our weakness, commonly leads them thereto by degrees. Thus, when he is resolved to bring a soul into those ways of loss and dereliction, and to dispose it thereby for the great favours he designs to communicate to it; he at first makes it feel the importunity of temptations, that it may begin to lose the relish of worldly things, and to exercise itself in the imitation of Jesus Christ.

Afterwards, when it is subject to God, when it discovers and adores in crosses the hand that strikes it, God deprives it of the consolation which proceeds from creatures, that it may no longer seek any consolation but in him alone; and that creatures by their false comforts may not gain any part of the love which is entirely due to God.

In fine, when the soul being separated from creatures, has renounced every thing that it could expect from them, in order to resign itself entirely to God, and desires no longer to taste any consolation but what comes from him, then God begins to hide his favours, communicating himself to the soul only by unknown ways; it no longer feels the presence of its well-beloved, and it falls into a general desolation, because it receives no comfort, either from God, or creatures: and all this happens in it, that it may purify its love, learn to seek God, not for his sweetness, but for himself, and less regard what he gives, than what he is, and what he deserves.

Here it is that the soul subject to God, without any regard to itself, sets no bound to its resignation, being indifferent about all things,

things, and as content on the cross as in joy, it no longer wills any thing but what God wills. This is what is called the state of pure love, which is so little known, is desired still less, and to which one scarce ever attains. Those that seek God with their whole heart, though they arrive not at the summit of this happy state, have at least the consolation of advancing in the way, according to the measure of grace which God communicates to them. But souls that have attained to perfect resignation, and remain faithful therein, know by experience that there is no pain equal to it, and that it is much easier to suffer martyrdom of the body, than the martyrdom of the spirit.

II. Those chosen souls comprehend much better than others, how much indebted we are to our Saviour, who was pleased, among so many other pains, to bear also this excessive dereliction without any consolation. For he disposed things so, that those which seem only the circumstances of his Passion, were more painful to him than the principal torments which they made him endure. The sensual man esteems none great evils but those which afflict the body, because he scarce knows any other: but the *spiritual man*, who, according to the expression of St. Paul, *judges and discerns all things*, knows that the mind has its pains, and that they are as far above corporeal pains, as the spirit is above the body.

Such was the dereliction of Christ on the cross: for far from receiving any comfort from creatures, it seems they are all conspired in tormenting him. His friends, his disciples, his apostles took flight; one of them betrayed him, another denied him; and he that followed him even unto *Calvary*, afflicted him more than he comforted them. The blessed Virgin and the other devout women that were with her, redoubled our Saviour's pain by their tears, and could not give him any relief. Of so many persons whom he had instructed, healed, and delivered, or whom he had miraculously fed in the desert, there was not one that endeavoured to do him any service, or that appeared to take any share in his pains. His enemies and executioners not satisfied with putting so cruel a sentence rigorously in execution, added new torments thereto by presenting him gall and vinegar; they pierced him also with a spear after his death, and in fine, they cast lots for his garments at the foot of the cross.

But what we cannot refrain from observing here is, that they exercised all these cruelties with as much joy as if they had delivered the nation from a public pest. There appeared in their conduct neither reason, justice, gratitude, nor compassion; and that excess of obduracy also occasioned our Saviour, who loved them, and died for them, an infinite pain.

III. He

He was not only forsaken by men, but also by angels; and none of those blessed spirits that had descended from heaven, to adore him in the manger, endeavoured to comfort him on the cross. As the winds had obeyed him, and the sea had formerly become firm under his feet, so he had reason to expect at least some relief from inanimate creatures, and to hope that the wood to which he was nailed, that the nails, and the thorns would have softened their natural hardness in his favour; but he also found nothing on that hand but rigour and insensibility. He was deprived of the sun's light, stript of all his cloaths, buried in a winding-sheet that belonged not to him, and in the burning thirst he endured, he could not obtain a glass of water to refresh himself.

Much more, the heavenly Father who is the true refuge of the afflicted, and the Holy Ghost who is called by excellency the comforter, forsook him also in this extremity, and would not dispense with him in the least of the pains which he was to suffer for our sins, by the disposition of the eternal counsel. Thus, the Father of mercies delivered up his well-beloved Son to the rage of the executioners, and to the power of darkness, that they might with one consent glut their whole fury and malice upon him, without any discretion.

IV. His soul itself, though it was happy, communicated to the body only the life and strength which was requisite to it for suffering and dying. As God always proportions the sufferings of his servants to the grace he gives them, so he measures the desolation of our Saviour according to the plenitude of grace which was in him. Therefore this dereliction was so sensible to him, that though he had supported the other torments of his Passion with a wonderful silence, he could not dissemble this, but amorously complains thereof to his Father, saying: *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* These words are not an effect of displeasure or impatience, they are rather the language of a filial confidence, which urges Christ to discover the excess of his pain to his eternal Father, as one friend sometimes relates to another what he suffers for him, though he suffers it heartily, and is ready to suffer it still more, if it were necessary.

The Son of God clearly shews that this complaint contained nothing bitter, and that impatience had no share in it, when he says afterwards, *I thirst*: for by those words he procured himself a new torment, by giving occasion to the *Jews* of presenting him gall and vinegar. So he demanded not an end of his dereliction, but testified that his humanity, in the extreme desolation wherewith it was oppressed, wished for some relief.

V. This

V. This dereliction of our Saviour had been foretold many ages before by the royal Prophet, *Psal. xxi. i. O God, my God, look upon me*, says he, *why hast thou forsaken me?* And he immediately gives the reason thereof; because *far from my salvation are the words of my sins*, that is, the sins I have taken upon myself. He particularly relates in the continuation of the same *Psal.*, how he was delivered up to his enemies, and how they made a jest of the confidence he had in God. And in another place, after having spoken of the greatness of the Son of God made man, he is astonished to see him thus forsaken, *Psal. lxxxviii. 39. thou hast*, says he, speaking to the eternal Father, *rejected and despised, thou hast been angry with thy Christ; thou hast overthrown the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his sanctuary on the earth; thou hast destroyed all the pledges thereof*, that he might be exposed to the violence of men and fury of beasts: *thou hast made his strength fear*, and hast become terrible to him, instead of being his protector. *All that pass by the way have pillaged him, he is become a reproach to his neighbours: thou hast exalted the right hand of them that oppress him; thou hast made all his enemies joyful: thou hast turned away the help of his sword, and hast not assisted him in battle; thou hast deprived him of his splendor, and his seat thou hast broken down to the ground: thou hast lessened the days of his time; thou hast overwhelmed him with confusion. How long, O Lord! dost thou turn away for ever, shall thy wrath burn as a fire?*

In fine, David beholding in spirit the blessings which our Saviour's humiliations were to produce, breaks out into thanksgivings: *blessed be our Lord*, says he, *for ever; so be it, so be it.* From thence we ought to conclude, that since the Holy Ghost has caused the derelictions of Christ to be described so fully and with such great care, it is that we may never lose the remembrance of them, and that we may not be ignorant of the infinite obligations we lie under to him.

VI. This would be the place to speak of the interior desolations which are so common in a spiritual life; but the example of Jesus forsaken on the cross, is so remarkable, that we may easily draw from thence, all the instruction which desolate souls have need of, for preserving them from sinking under the greatness of their pain. So I shall content myself with observing three things, very proper for instructing and comforting them at the same time.

The first, that though our Saviour has recourse to his Father in the extreme pain he was in, yet he desires not, either to be delivered from thence, or to be comforted therein; and he refuses the relief he might have given himself as God, by darting upon the inferior part of his soul, a ray of that beatific joy, which the superior part possessed the fulness of; but he would accomplish his work, and persevere till death in that dereliction, in order to teach his afflicted servants, first, that they ought not to think all lost, nor despair of their advancement, when they find nature oppressed under the weight of desolation; because that sense is to them a source of merit. Secondly, that the most efficacious remedy in these sort of pains is, to have recourse to God, from whom they come, not by desiring him to take them from us, or to diminish them; but by receiving them with an humble submission to his holy will, without begging any other help from him, than what is necessary for supporting them with fidelity and perseverance; to which we must join frequenting the sacraments, and the advice of an able director.

For, as it is of faith, that God is the author of our afflictions, and that he sends them, or permits them always for our good, so we cannot doubt but recourse to him with a heart submissive to his orders, is the surest means, not only of bearing the cross without looking back; but also of finding a solid peace therein. There is no sacrifice more agreeable to God, than thus to resign ourselves entirely to his providence, by renouncing all consolation, except that which he vouchsafes to give us at such time and in such a manner as he shall please.

VII. The second thing which disconsolate people ought here to be advised in is, not to let themselves be overcome by temptation which commonly accompanies this state, and which induces them to believe that God has withdrawn his hand, and has entirely forgotten them. This thought is equally false and dangerous: for Faith teaches us, that the Eternal Father could neither forget nor abandon his only Son, though he left him for a time in an extreme desolation. On the contrary, he thereby accomplishes in an admirable manner, what he had promised him, when a Heavenly voice, heard by many, pronounced these words; *I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again*, John xii. 28, viz. the name of God. Indeed it was by the way of sufferings that God the Father led his Son to victory and triumph; and it was thereby that he made him be known and adored by all nations, acquired him an infinite number of souls, and subjected all his enemies to him.

If it be therefore true, that God was pleased to glorify his Son by the torments and reproaches of the Cross; can it be doubted but that he prepares a crown of glory for those, who endeavour to imitate our Saviour by their patience in afflictions? This sentiment would be very unworthy of the goodness of God, who himself assures us by his prophet; that *our Lord is near to all that invoke him, that are of a contrite heart; and the humble of spirit he will save.* Psal. cxiv. 19. xxxiii. 19.

VIII. The third advice that must be given to souls in desolation is, that Christ, according to the observation of St. *Cyprian*, endured that pain, not only to serve us for a model in those which befall us; but much more also for meriting us the courage of persevering therein, and the consolation which is to follow them. Hence it is that however forsaken a servant of God may be, he never will be forsaken to such a degree as Christ was. This Divine Saviour treats us much more mildly than his Father treated him. He wants every thing in his dereliction, and we want nothing in ours. He is always with us in tribulation, according to his promise; and though his assistance be not sensible to us, though it be not even known to us, yet we cannot so much as doubt but that it is real and true; and we are always supported, though we do not always see the hand that supports us.

Thus when our Saviour sends forth from his disconsolate heart, these most touching words: *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* which is as if he had said to his Father: remember, O my God! the reason why thou hast forsaken me, it is that after me thou mightest never forsake any one. I conjure thee therefore, by the extreme dereliction into which I am reduced, never to forsake any of those that shall be afflicted by thy orders or permission. Receive them all, O my God! protect them, glorify them, as thou glorifiest me, and make them comprehend that a soul is never more agreeable in thy sight, never nearer to, nor more worthy of thee, than when thou seemest to have entirely forsaken him.

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ forsaken by God his Father.

O TRUE Comforter of afflicted hearts! only Hope of dejected minds! faithful Lover of disconsolate souls! O Jesus the strength of the weak, and refuge of the forsaken! what abyss of sorrows is that, in which I see thee plunged? How dost thou break that admirable silence which thou hast so constantly kept? What is become of that patience which was proof against all things? Does it begin to escape thee, O my Saviour! and break out into complaints and sighs? Art thou become like me, who tremble at the sight of the least danger, imagine myself in the bottom of the sea when the storm arises, and am without constancy, confidence, and to use thy own words, *a man of little faith*? Yet when I have courage enough to throw myself into the sea, over which thou wouldst have me pass, I find thee immediately, and thou makest me walk dry foot thereon. Thou makest firm under the feet of thy servants, the waves of tribulation, and sufferest thyself to be overwhelmed therewith.

O Divine Lamb! that hast been till now so mild, so patient, and so calm; hast concealed all thy pains in thy heart; and hast suffered without complaint and contradiction every thing they made thee suffer; thou beginnest to speak, expressest thy pain, breakest out in sighs, and complaineest to thy father in terms capable of softening the very rocks. Whence can this change come, O Lord! but from thy being *come into the depth of the sea* of anguish and desolation, and *a tempest having overwhelmed thee*, finding no help, and thy humanity being unable any longer to bear so universal a desertion? O Jesus, thou love and life of my soul! why cannot I comfort thee? why cannot I share with thee in the pain thou endurest? But thou wilt accomplish what thou hast foretold by the prophet *Isaiab: I have trodden the press alone, and — there is not a man with me.* lxiii. 3.

II. What shall I render thee for all the blessings thou grantest me, O my Divine Comforter! How shall I correspond to the love thou bearest me? for it is neither by chance, nor necessity, that thou art reduced to this prodigious desertion; it is a pure effect of thy choice and love. If thou couldst not have hindered it, the angels would have come to thy help, the stars would have fallen from heaven,

the elements would have been confounded, and all creatures would have joined to defend and deliver thee : but love which was become master of thy heart, and all thy actions ordained it otherwise ; it has reduced thee to that excess of affliction, and made thee more sensible of my necessities than of thy own pains. Thou hast reserved for thyself alone that pain so little known, but so terrible ; and thou hast been pleased to suffer it without being comforted, that we might be comforted in ours : for thou dost not abandon thy servants in time of tribulation, and thou art even never nearer them than when they think themselves most forsaken. I adore that *will*, ever willing to help us ; and I adore that *love* always ready to comfort us.

III. What would become of me, O my God ! if thou didst deal otherwise with me ? But what am I, and what art thou ? oughtest thou to prefer my necessities to thy own repose ? is it just that the Son of the living God should endure so dreadful a torment for the consolation of a slave ? Thou knowest, O divine Jesus ! thy own greatness, and my meanness ; but that infinite inequality which is betwixt thee and me, does not hinder thee from sacrificing thyself for me, not that thou seest any thing in me which deserves it ; but because thou findest in thy love the reasons for doing me good.

Thou wast pleased to teach me thereby, O master of Eternal Truth ! that I may hope for all things from thee, how unworthy soever I am of receiving any favour from thee. Am not I therefore very miserable, not to love thee with all my strength, and not to renounce all human consolation for love of thee ? Thou art always liberal, O my God ! always magnificent, always infinite. Thy greatness appears in all things, in loving, in pardoning, in expecting, in supporting my miseries and ingritudes, and in suffering for me without help or consolation, that I might owe all my help and consolation to thee. How much were I to be lamented, if my salvation and happiness depended on any other but thee ; for where should I find, O my Saviour ! a will like thine ?

IV. Thou acceptedst with submission and love the dereliction to which thy Father reduced thee ; thou supportedst thy sacred humanity in that severe combat ; but thou suspendedst all the sweetness thou couldst have communicated to it, that it might suffer without any consolation. Thou wast not pleased that an angel should come from Heaven to comfort thee ; thou broughtest thy holy Mother to the foot of the Cross, that her pain might redouble thine ; permittedst the flight of thy apostles, that they might neither assist,

nor defend thee ; concealedst thy infinite power, that thy enemies seeing nothing but weakness in thee, might oppress thee with impunity ; wast pleased to be nailed to the Cross, as a thief, impostor, seducer, and a disturber of the public peace, and as the wickedest of all men, naked, covered with wounds, suffering in every part of thy body, deprived at mid-day of the light of the sun, forsaken by every one, and even by thy Father.

It is true all those pains are through thy own choice ; but they are no less painful, since they oblige thee to have recourse to thy Father, with such affecting words, and such deep sighs. O Jesus ! thou God of my heart, joy of my soul, consolation of the afflicted, and refuge of the forsaken, when I behold thee so desolate, I cannot express myself ; but I wish I could melt with love in thy presence, or at least open to thee the bottom of my heart, that thou mightest see whether there be any thing in it that can comfort thee. Since every thing fails thee, O my God ! in this extremity, let not my love at least, cool as it is, fail thee ; kindle it, O Lord ! that it make me feel what thou sufferest, and fasten me to the Cross with thee.

V. I desire with all my heart never to depart from thy Cross, O my Saviour ! and to depart always from myself ; because I am sensible of the necessity I am under of keeping near thee, and know that thy dereliction is a continual example and reproach to me. Is it possible I should presume to complain when I am deprived of heavenly consolations, after having seen thee in such great desolation ? But, alas ! I am so miserable, that when thou withdrawest thy sweetness, I immediately think myself forgotten, rejected, and forsaken by thee, O my God ! and instead of seeking thee then with more care, I go a begging for vain consolations amongst creatures. I fly from thy Cross, am diffident of thy goodness, though I see thee have recourse to thy Father, remain on the Cross, and suffer mortal pains upon it ; till thou hast accomplished by thy death all the dispositions of the Eternal Counsel.

When thou comfortest me, I am mighty in promises, offer myself to suffer for thy service, resign myself entirely to thy will, and even beg for the Cross out of a desire of being like thee ; but if thou hidest thy countenance from me, if thou givest me not what I had begged of thee in my abundance, I fall into dejection, think I have lost thy favour, and exhausted thy mercies. Ought I not at least to remember, O Saviour of my soul ! that in the extreme desolation, in which thou art, thou hast not ceased to be the Son of God, and hast lost nothing of those immense treasures of graces
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that were contained in thee. How miserable, weak, stupid, inconstant, blind, and ungrateful am I! how imperfect and interested is my love! purify it, O Lord! by the perfection of thine.

When I examine my heart, by means of thy light, I find it fullied, impure, and corrupt; and when I flatter myself with seeking nothing but thee alone, I always seek myself. It is not necessary, for defeating me, that thou shouldst use thy power, O my God! For, if at the time when I think myself confirmed in thy service, thou deprivest me only of the support of thy sensible sweetness, the least contradiction, the least temptation, dejects me, and throws me into diffidence. I acknowledge therefore before thee, O my Saviour! that I am nothing; and that I can do nothing; but thy divine power can fortify my weakness.

VI. How am I confounded, O Infinite Mercy! when I think on another much greater misery, wherein I have lived so long! How many years have I spent without loving and desiring thee, without suffering for thee, and without so much as comprehending what interior affliction is? Occupied and drunk with the false pleasures of the world, which separate me from thee, I was neither sensible of the misfortune of losing thee, nor of the happiness of possessing thee. Why did I thus forget thee, O my Jesus! How could I fly from thee, O Beauty always ancient, and always new! Ah! it is because I have forsaken thee, that thou art thus forsaken by thy Father. Thou expiatest the forgetfulness of God wherein I have lived, by the dereliction in which thou diest.

I deserved to have been deprived of thy grace and the help of creatures; they ought even to have armed themselves against me, because I have forsaken thee. But thou wouldst not have them revenge thee. Thou hast more care of me than of thyself; and thou art forsaken, that I may not be so. Pardon me, O Lord! all the sins, whereby I have brought thee into that condition wherein I behold thee. I return to thee, O *Father of Mercies*! receive me, O *God of all Consolation*! support me with thy grace; and grant that so many pains and so much love may not be unprofitable to me.

O disconsolate Jesus! and at the same time the refuge of disconsolate souls! thy love teaches me that it is from thy being forsaken I ought to receive all the strength I have need of for bearing mine. I am persuaded that the most terrible dereliction I can fall into, would be that of having no share in thine; but as thou hast given me life by thy death, and hast delivered me by thy pains
from

from those which were due to me, so thou hast merited by thy dereliction, that the heavenly Father should not abandon me; and that he might never be nearer me by his mercy, than when I am humbled most by desolation.

O Jesus, thou light of my soul! illuminate my interior eyes, in the time of tribulation; and since it is profitable for me to suffer it, have no regard to my fears, nor to my weakness. I conjure thee, O my God! by thy derelictions, not to keep me from affliction, but not to forsake me in affliction; to teach me to seek thee therein, as my only comforter; to support my faith, fortify my hope, and purify my love therein; grant me grace to acknowledge thy hand therein, and not to desire any other consolation therein than what comes from thee. Humble me then as much as thou pleasest, and comfort me only that I may be able to suffer, and to persevere until death in suffering. Since the graces I beg of thee are the fruit of thy derelictions, make the virtue thereof appear in my infirmity, and glorify thyself in my misery, O my Jesus! thou only refuge of my soul.

O most Holy Mother of God! you who have seen and felt the extreme desolation of your well-beloved Son, assist me in the time of mine. And ye Saints of Heaven, who have passed through that trial, take compassion of those that suffer it, and obtain for me the grace of being faithful therein until death. *Amen.*

XLIX. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

The Thirst he endures.

MEN are commonly cured of their maladies, by being let blood, by potions and medicines that are given them; but if a child that is yet at the breast becomes sick, the remedies are taken by the nurse, even when she is well, that the child may receive benefit thereby. Human nature weakened by original sin, was incapable of bearing the remedy it stood in need of; therefore Christ considered us, in the extreme weakness we were in, as little children, and was pleased in some manner to become our nurse. So it is he expresses himself by a prophet: *and I, says he, will nurse the nurse of Ephraim, carried them in my arms; and they knew not that I cured them.* Osee xi. 3.

By

By his affection for sinners, he keeps them near his heart, nourishes them with the milk of his doctrine and grace, and gives his blood in order to spare theirs: and whilst he prevents them with the blessings of his sweetness, he drinks, for their cure, the bitter cup which his Father presents to him. *Adam* disobeyed God by tasting the forbidden fruit, and *Christ*, in order to repair that fault, was pleased to taste gall and vinegar, and *became obedient to death, even to the death of the cross.* Phil. ii. 8.

He drank not the vinegar mixed with gall, but both separately: for before he was crucified, he took gall mixed with wine and myrrh; his cruel executioners presenting that liquor to him, instead of what was usually given to patients, for strengthening them. Our Saviour drank it not, he satisfied himself with tasting it; but without complaining, or expressing any disgust. He then accomplished the first part of *David's* prophecy: *they gave gall for my meat*; and the other on the cross, at the last hour of his life, when after having lost almost all his blood, he felt a burning thirst, which made the same prophet add the following words: *and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* Psal. lxxviii. 22.

Jesus knew there would be none to give him a glass of water, and that they would only bring him vinegar; but because he was pleased to execute, even to the smallest circumstances, every thing that his Father had ordained, he expressed what he suffered, by saying: *I thirst.* His blessed mother, and the few friends that had followed him unto *Calvary*, were extremely grieved that they could not give him that small relief. The executioners that could no longer torment him otherwise, applied to his mouth a sponge full of vinegar, which they had fastened to the end of a reed: he refused it not, though he knew what pain it would give him by contracting the stomach.

II. Jesus seeing therefore that nothing more remained for him to accomplish, either of what the prophets had foretold concerning him, or of what his heart desired, said: *all is consummated.* Even as a traveller, who after having walked a long time in the heat of summer, finds a fountain, drinks greedily, and expresses by a great sigh how much he is refreshed; so our Saviour, as if he had forgot all his past labours, and content with seeing them so happily finished, says, with a deep sigh: *all is consummated.*

If any one had then asked him, what therefore was the work, the accomplishment of which seemed to give him joy, and what profit he reaped thereby; he could not have answered that his joy proceeded from his having received vinegar to drink in his thirst, since

since that had only served to augment his pains; nor from seeing himself at the end of his torments, since he still had death and his last agony to suffer. Whence therefore springs that motion of joy, which makes him say, as after a complete victory, *all is consummated*? Without doubt it springs from his having abandoned his humanity to the power of love; love had no more to require of it, after so abundant a satisfaction, the fruits of which he was going to reap. It is as if Christ had said: I have satisfied for the sins of the whole world, reconciled men to God, and acquired them the graces of salvation and sanctity; so *all is consummated*.

It is perhaps also for this reason the apostle St. John concludes, by those last words, which our Saviour pronounced on the cross, the history of his passion and life: in order to make us understand that the Son of God died content; and that after having quenched his burning thirst of our salvation, all his desires were accomplished.

III. It must however be owned that Christ's thirst is not entirely satisfied: for after having prepared our remedy, he desires also that we should use it. If it be natural for all men to wish earnestly to see the fruit of their labours, how much more will it be so to our Saviour, who undertook and consummated so much labour and perfection? The view of our salvation gave him infinitely more relief in his torments, than the drink he desired could have done; and that bitter portion which they gave him, which could not quench his natural thirst, served to the accomplishment of our cure. But because the interior thirst of Christ could not be fully quenched, but by the free application which we ourselves make of the remedy he has prepared for us, he died in the heat of thirst, that is, in an ardent desire of seeing all men reap profit, for their salvation, from his passion and death. Therefore those that refuse a remedy so precious and so efficacious, and oblige, by their sins, that charitable physician to become a terrible judge to them, present something to him more bitter than gall and vinegar.

This makes him complain by the prophet *Isaiah*, v. 2. because *a vineyard was made, and he hedged it, and planted it, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a press therein; and looked that it should yield grapes, and it yielded wild grapes*. These words ought also to make us comprehend how much more pain the thirst he had for the salvation of so many sinners, whose ruin he foresaw, notwithstanding all the helps he procured them, gave him, than the corporeal thirst he endured.

When in the silence of prayer we meditate on the state our Saviour was then in, natural and christian compassion makes us wish

to have been present at his punishment, in order to have offered him water, and to have hindered vinegar from being presented to him; but we ought to consider that we are more cruel than the *Jews*, if beholding him die in his burning thirst after our salvation, we refuse him the refreshment he requires of us, that is, if we will not forsake our sins which caused his death, follow the examples of his holy life, and love him with all our heart.

But if we consider the time and other circumstances, wherein our Saviour declares his thirst, we shall find therein an admirable lesson of the purity of love wherewith God deserves to be followed. For in that extreme desolation, wherein he had reason, it seems, to expect some comfort from his Father, he not only desires none, but by saying, *I thirst*, he gives his executioners occasion of making him suffer a new torment.

IV. How well do we here discover, what the different motions of nature and grace are in time of adversity! Nature, because it is weak, is dejected, contracted, and complains; but the will supported with divine grace, is elevated, dilated, and offers itself, if God orders it so, to suffer still more. Though there are presented to the soul actions to be done which seems impossible to it, yet notwithstanding it undertakes them with courage, being persuaded that commonly that impossibility is also rather an effect of its fear than of its weakness; and it experiences at last, that by the help of God, and the confidence it has in him, what seemed calculated to deject it, has served only to fortify it.

The two cows that were yoked to the wain which carried the ark of the God of *Israel*, though they looked back, and expressed by their lowings, the pain they felt in being separated from their calves and pastures; yet they went continually forward, by the motion which God gave them, without turning either to the right or left, till they arrived at the place where they were to be sacrificed. So the repugnance of nature does not hinder the servant of God from advancing in the way of virtue, nor diminish the merit of his sacrifice: on the contrary he devotes himself to all the labours of an austere life, without listening to flesh and blood, and thus offers himself to God, as a living host, which is the greatest proof that can be given of the desire one has of pleasing him; but he that is discouraged, and draws back in contradictions, clearly shews the small progress he has made in virtue.

God was pleased formerly to try in the desert, by a journey of forty years, the fidelity of a nation which he had preferred to all others, and on which he had bestowed abundant favours; but be-
cause,

cause, whenever they were in want of any thing, they forsook their God, to serve strange gods, God incessantly complains of the obstinacy and ingratitude of his people. For the surest mark of pure love, is in sufferings to preserve the desire of suffering; and to ask, as our Saviour did, in the midst of desolation, for gall and vinegar.

We must not here forget the extreme opposition which is found between Christ and the world. Christ always opposed the world, of which he despised the riches, rejected the pleasures, and condemned the maxims; and in order to disengage our hearts from them, and to carry them towards Heaven, he rendered the conquest of Heaven easy to us, so far as to promise it to us for a cup of cold water.

V. He took likewise such great care not to retain any thing of the world, that he died naked, stript, deprived of all help, and left at the foot of his cross the poor cloaths which the world had furnished him with. On the other hand, the world which had resolved to be revenged of our Saviour for his contempt, was not content till it saw that innocent lamb expire on the cross; it refused him in that last hour a cup of water which he desired, and gave him gall and vinegar. But Christ received at his death that last token of the hatred of the world, with great indifference, as he had had aversion and contempt in his life-time for every thing the world loves. Thus he died an enemy to the world, as he had lived; to teach us that we cannot make peace with the world at any time, without becoming an enemy to Christ.

But that divine Saviour has also taught us by his example, that as he was devoured all his life with the zeal of God's house, and died in the actual thirst after our salvation; so those that will be saved must proportion their hope according to the care and desire they have of their own salvation.

VI. It is natural that the end for which we act should be the principle and rule of the whole action. The wood which a statue is to be made of, is wrought in a different manner from that whereof a chair is to be made, and the work is polished with so much the greater care, as the recompence expected for it is the more certain. Now if this conduct be regularly observed in worldly affairs, because it is conformable to right reason and our own interest, why is it not observed in the affairs of eternal salvation? How can we desire to be saved, and at the same time employ all our care, labour, and thoughts on every thing that must be our ruin? This disorder, proceeds no doubt, from men either not desiring

desiring their salvation, or desiring it so weakly, that they do not regard it as the rule of their life, and the end of all their actions.

Those therefore that desire to be saved, ought not to hope ever to see that desire accomplished, as it becomes not in them the rule of their conduct. Christ has redeemed us, by referring to our salvation all the actions of his life, and in the sufferings of his death; and do we pretend to be saved in the general forgetfulness of our most essential duties? what blindness! what stupid folly!

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ in his thirst of our salvation.

THOU sufferest another thirst, O my Saviour! than that which appears to the eyes of men; and that thirst is not yet quenched; thou broughtest it from heaven, was born, livedst, diedst, didst rise again, and ascendedst into heaven with it: thou feelest it still, and wilt to the consummation of ages: for it is the thirst after the salvation of men, which will not be satisfied, till, after having heaped thy blessings upon them, thou seest them reign eternally with thee. O divine love! how dost thou love to communicate thyself?

But what signifies it to thee whether I be saved or lost? Can I give thee any thing thou hast not? What delight dost thou find in remaining with the children of men, in possessing their souls, and in transforming them into thee? Thou complaineest of my coldness, requirest me to love thee, and annihilatest thyself for gaining my love, so far as to forget thy own majesty. Thou desirest on one hand, that I should look upon thee as a sovereign, infinite, and incomprehensible Being; and on the other, thou abasest thyself so far as to seek me, as if I were thy equal. Thou treatest the soul that loves thee, with an ineffable familiarity; thou complaineest to it, and thou hearest its complaints; thou tenderly embracest it, and permittest it to embrace thee likewise; thou entrustest it with thy secrets, and wouldst have it entrust thee with its own. If it departs from thee, thou callest it back; if it walks in darkness, thou enlightenest it; if it be sorrowful, thou comfortest it, and givest thyself to it with all the goods thou possessest.

O divine

O divine love! thou requirest nothing from those that are thine, but their love. He that loves thee not, knows thee not; and he that loves thee needs not ask thee for any thing else. Thou art a consuming fire, O my God! thou seekest only to extend and communicate thyself; and it being impossible to make us gods by nature, thou makest us such by thy benefits. The tongue cannot express, the ear hear, nor the mind conceive, and nothing but love alone can experience, what thou hast prepared for those that love thee purely. Thy thirst, which is a thirst of love, cannot be quenched but by our love; and it will never be fully satisfied, till we possess the same happiness whereby thou art happy.

How many times, O my Saviour! have I offered thee gall and vinegar instead of the love I owed thee? But why do not I love thee? Why do not I love thee with all my heart? What do I find out of thee, comparable to thee? Thou hast created my soul capable of possessing thee; and I seek out of thee such things as may amuse it, but cannot satisfy it. As thou hast given it, in creating it, a hunger and thirst after the supreme good, it cannot be satiated with the possession of perishable goods: they do but provoke its hunger and thirst; because thou alone, O my God! canst satisfy both.

Wretched that I am! I experience it daily, and do not yet comprehend it. Thou refusedst the gall and vinegar that were presented to thee, and wouldst likewise have refused any other liquor; because thy thirst cannot be quenched but by my salvation. Permit me to say it, O Lord! I experience some such thing; I taste unprofitably of the refreshments which creatures present to me, find nothing but bitterness therein, and my thirst is not quenched, because it cannot be quenched but by thee alone.

Forget, O my God! the blindness wherein I have lived: I come to thee, desire thee, and sigh after thee; and acknowledge that I cannot find the cure and repose of my soul but in thee. I resign to thee, O Lord! this soul which thou lovest so tenderly; let not the piteous state in which thou seest it hinder thee from receiving it. I will no longer love any thing but thee alone, and for ever renounce all other love. Grant, O Lord! that out of thee I may find nothing but disgust, bitterness, and affliction of spirit: that I may be in the happy necessity of desiring, loving, and relishing nothing but thee alone.

II. *Even as the hart thirsteth after the fountains of waters, so doth my soul, disgusted of the world and itself, thirst after thee, O God!*
who

who alone canst quench the thirst wherewith it burns: *When shall I come and appear before the face of God?* When shall I behold the beauty of thy countenance? I seek thee on every side, and till I find thee, I maintain myself only with tears: *they have been my bread day and night*, since my interior began to sigh after thee, O thou life of my soul! O my treasure and beatitude! *in a desert land, inaccessible, and without water*, my soul seeks thee, with an earnest desire of *seeing thy strength and thy glory*, Ps. xli. lxii.

Delay not to grant me this happiness, O divine Love! be not revenged for the gall and vinegar I presented to thee in thy thirst, by letting me suffer long that thirst which I have of possessing thee. Punish me not for my past ingratitude, by hiding thy countenance from me, the sight of which alone can render me happy. I am unworthy thereof, I own; but if I do not deserve thou shouldst satisfy my desires, satisfy thy own, O Lord! inflame me with thy love, and transform me entirely into thee.

But delay not, O thou only hope of my soul! for when I once possess thee, and when thou hast purified my heart, I shall be wholly thine, and thou shalt be wholly mine. Then shall I no longer have aught but disgust for every thing that is not my God; and shall without difficulty part with every thing else, out of the joy I shall feel in being thine. Then my soul shall be enlarged, I shall have every thing, and shall be able to do every thing; every thing shall conduct me, and every thing shall unite me to thee.

Thou knowest I cannot give thee my whole heart, nor quench the thirst thou burnest with, if thou thyself dost not give me that living water, which alone can quench thy thirst. Thou hast promised it, O Lord! to all those that shall ask thee for it with faith and love; but thou must give me that faith also and love, that I may be indebted to thee for every thing.

I love thee, O my God! I believe thou canst give me all the goods I desire; my heart begs them of thee, and invokes thee with all its strength, O fountain of living water! make a river of those waters which fly up to thee flow into this heart. Let all my desires tend towards thee, and my love seek nothing but thee. When will the time come, wherein I shall only live for thee, O my true life! When shall I leave all things to possess thee, O treasure of eternal goods! When shall I attain to the happiness of seeing thee, O my sovereign happiness!

O most

O most pure Mother of God! I conjure you by the pain you felt, in seeing gall and vinegar presented to your well-beloved Son, to obtain for me a thirst after justice, and those living waters which alone are capable of quenching my thirst. O saints of heaven! ye who swim in a river of peace, and cease not to burn with love; ye have an ardent thirst after the salvation of souls lamenting in this banishment; procure us what ye desire we might have, that we may with you eternally bless the Author of all our happiness. *Amen.*

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On Christ having gall and vinegar presented to him.

WHAT, O my Saviour! is there nothing but what thou wilt suffer for the cure of my evils! Thou art thirsty, and they bring thee gall and vinegar. The only comfort thou seekest is to accomplish what was foretold of thee; that *in thy thirst they gave thee vinegar to drink*, P^{sa}l. lxxviii. 22. Thy love brings to thy mind the remembrance of this prophecy; 'tis it that urges thee to declare it, in order to give occasion to thy enemies of making thee suffer a new torment. That fire does not abate, O God of love; it is insatiable; and it continually seeks fresh matter to consume.

O Jesus, thou happiness and glory of my soul! thou well knowest why thou didst so; thou knewest at that time how badly I should correspond to the ardour of thy love, how negligent I should be in thy service, careless in pleasing thee, contrary to thy will, disgusted with thy maxims, rebellious to thy inclinations, insensible of thy benefits, faithless in my promises, and inconstant in my resolutions. Thou madest a last effort for overcoming my obduracy; and yet always full of esteem and love for myself, always intent on seeking my own conveniencies, always earnest in satisfying my passions, and always tied to the flesh and the world, I think on nothing but my own destruction, whilst thou thinkest only on my salvation!

Thou art wholly possess'd with the care of my salvation, and I rather chuse to follow the inclination which draws me towards the precipice, than allow myself to be conducted by thy love. O
earthly

earthly man that I am! When wilt thou break, O my only deliverer! the chains of my self-love? When wilt thou draw me by those of thy love? May that happy moment come soon, O Jesus, my repose, my liberty, and my life.

II. But how can it be, O inexhaustible source of all goodness! that thou findest nothing in thy thirst but a bitter drink, more capable of tearing thy bowels, than of refreshing thee! Do the angels that ministered to thee in the desert no longer know thee? or if they know thee, why do they suffer vinegar to be given thee to drink? Wilt thou therefore be poor, so far as to want a cup of water, in thy extreme need of it, thou who art the master and sovereign Lord of the universe? Is it thus that the world treats thee? It is indebted to thee for all it has, and for all it is, and dares it refuse thee what it refuses not to the meanest animals!

May all creatures praise thee, O my God! May all the works of thy love bless thee eternally! Behold the world which takes revenge of thee; thou never didst taste its pleasures; thou despisedst its honours and riches; hast condemned what it approves, and approved what it condemns; and wouldst never have any peace with it: and now when thou needest its help, it treats thee in the same manner. Before thou art nailed to the cross, it gives thee myrrh with gall; and when thou art ready to expire, it presents vinegar to thee. Thus, in dying, thou feelest the cruelty of the world, which thou hast hated all thy life.

III. For it is true, O my Saviour! that thou hast always been an enemy to the world, and hast never had any commerce with it, either in thy birth, during thy life, or at thy death. I am therefore very blind and miserable, for having loved, served, and pleased it, and for having consecrated the best part of my life to it. It has corrupted my mind and heart, depraved my judgment and taste, and has made me esteem bitter things sweet, and sweet things bitter; it has given me a distaste of virtue and spiritual things, so far as to make me abandon thy conversation by the false pleasures wherewith it has intoxicated me. O infinite mercy! how many sins dost thou behold in me to pardon! I ought to bless thee continually, O my God! that the earth does not open and swallow me up, that the devils do not come from hell to drag me thither, and that all creatures do not arm themselves against me, to revenge thee of a faithless servant that has preferred falsehoods to truth, death to life, and a world full of miseries and thy mortal enemy, to thyself, O thou salvation and happiness of my soul!

I clearly

I clearly see, O Master of Eternal Truth! that by tasting that gall and vinegar without drinking it, thou condemnest my disorderly affections, and teachest me thereby, how bitter what the world offers us seems to those that have once tasted thy sweetness. If thou art, O my Jesus! as I cannot doubt of it, goodness and sweetness itself, how can I find any thing agreeable where thou art not? Correct in me, O Lord! this bad taste, and heal the evils that occasion it, that for the future the world may seem as bitter to me as to thee.

I conjure thee, O my God! by that mortal thirst which thou enduredst; by the gall, myrrh, and vinegar which they presented to thee, to root out of my heart, the love and relish of the world. May this corrupt world *be crucified to me, and may I be crucified to it.* May there never be peace between it and me: may I regard it as the poison of my soul, and may it treat me as its declared enemy.

Thou wilt take that bitter draught, that those bowels of mercy, which the whips and nails could not reach, may not be exempt from torment; and that there may be nothing in thee but what suffers for me. Accomplish then, O Lord! the work of thy love; work in me so great a change, that I may no longer relish any thing but thee alone; that I may esteem and love nothing but thee alone; and that out of thee, every thing may seem bitter and insupportable to me: for thou art the true Repose, the perfect Sweetness, the Sovereign Good, and the Eternal happiness of my soul.

IV. Though I were so happy, O my Saviour! as to find no pleasure but in thy love and service, ought it to be astonishing; after having seen thee, in the midst of thy pains, take so bitter a portion; and say afterwards, as if thou hadst quenched thy thirst, by some agreeable and refreshing liquor, I am content: *all is consummated*; I can now return to my Father; because my thirst of suffering for the salvation of mankind, is satisfied at last? Were it not more reasonable to be astonished at the extreme insensibility of thee wherein I have lived, O my God! and of every thing that regards thy service? For, why do not I make my whole joy consist in loving thee, and suffering for thee; since thou placest all thine in suffering for me?

I adore that charitable heart, I bless those Paternal Bowels, I give thee, O Jesus! infinite thanks for the pleasure thou hadst in doing me good. May that most pure and generous love, which burns in my heart, melt the ice of mine; may it destroy my re-

missness, render me a perfect imitator of thy virtues, and inspire me with a faithful, constant, and inviolable attachment to thy will in all things.

L. SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

His Agony and Death.

CHRIST lived on earth thirty three years and three months, reckoning from his birth; and thirty four whole years, reckoning from his conception; and he lived all that time in continual sufferings. He spent the time of his infancy in a foreign land, far from his native country and relations, in order to avoid *Herod's* persecution. From his infancy to the age of thirty years, his most ordinary occupation was to pray to his Father for the salvation of sinners, to obey *Joseph* and *Mary*, and to practise the most excellent virtues in obscurity and retirement. He employed the three last years of his life, in preaching the Evangelic Faith, in working miracles, and in heaping benefits on men.

These three parts of our Saviour's life, like great rivers, after having carried plenty and fertility every where, ended at last in his Passion, as in an immense ocean of all manner of blessings. His life was short, if we count the years thereof, since he died in the flower of his age; but we may say it was very long if we consider every thing he did. He fully accomplished the work for which he came, satisfied for all the sins of the world, reconciled men to God, left us admirable examples of all virtues, acquired us infinite merits, and obtained of his Father all he desired.

II. He never spared his body nor life, became like sinners in all things, sin excepted. For that purpose he concealed the glory of his Blessed Soul, and the Majesty of his Divine Person. He abandoned himself to the fury of his enemies, and suffered all the torments they inflicted on him. He sacrificed for our remedy every thing he had received from our nature, that is, his flesh, his blood, his strength, all his actions, and all his thoughts. He had nothing remaining but life; but a life which in appearance ought not to have ended, that we might have had him always living amongst us, who had given us such resplendent marks of his infinite love.

It is true it is decreed for men to die once, Heb. ix. 27. but ought that decree to extend to him who is the true life; yet he chose rather to suffer death, than to set bounds to his love, and not to give for the salvation of men, the thing in the world which men most esteem.

He could not die by sickness, because he had a perfect complexion, and consequently incapable of any disorder of humours. Neither could he perish by any unforeseen accident: for as those sort of accidents unforeseen in regard of men are always foreseen by God, it might in that case have been said that our Saviour had procured his own death; which could not agree with him who was the author of life, and who was to be for us, in all his actions, a perfect model of the most excellent virtues. It was necessary therefore that he should expire in the midst of torments, in order to testify more love to us, to acquire us an immense treasure of merits, and abundantly to satisfy his Eternal Father, for the sins of all men.

III. Thus after having satisfied his love towards men, and fully accomplished the will of his Father, he delivered himself up to the power of death. He had already lost almost all his sacred blood; was weakened by the torments he had endured; his breast was contracted; his breath became difficult, and as he did not lie on a bed, but was suspended in the air, upon nails, which tore his feet and hands, and not having a single moment's rest, his pains were much greater than all that men commonly suffer in their agony. For the violence of the pain lessens in us by degrees at the approach of death, and we cease to feel in proportion as we cease to know: but our Saviour had always a sound judgment to the last breath, and did not cease to suffer till he ceased to live.

Then his head hung down; his eyes which had been the consolation of all the afflicted, began to close; his lips, from whence proceeded the words of Eternal life, turned cold and pale. But that he might shew the world he died, because he was pleased so to do; that he gave his life; and that they did not take it from him against his will; in order to teach us to die well, after having taught us to live well, at the time when other men lose their speech, fortified by his own power, he lifted up his head, opened his eyes, fixed them on heaven, and cried out with a loud voice, saying: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* Afterwards he bowed down his head, as a mark of his perfect submission, and opened his mouth to give up his last breath.

Thus died the Author of life, the Redeemer of mankind, the Son of the living God, *the Prince of peace, the Father of the world to come*, our Comforter, our Friend, our Shepherd, our Model, and our only Hope. And thus he died, to teach us by his death to die holily, that is, to die, in submitting ourselves sincerely to the Divine Will, and in meekly restoring, into the hands of our creator, the soul he gave us.

IV. Some holy fathers discoursing one day together, upon the best manner of preparing for that last passage, each of them proposed that which the Holy Ghost should suggest to him. One said he knew no better preparation for death than a sincere contrition. Another, that it was requisite above all things to be assisted with the sacraments of the church. The third gave the preference to pure prayer and union with God. The fourth recommended nothing so much as to implore the help of the saints. And the last affirmed, that in order to die well, he desired nothing but an entire conformity to the Divine Will. It was with great reason he spoke thus: for that disposition includes all others; it renders contrition perfect, prepares the soul for receiving the virtues of the sacraments plentifully, elevates and unites the heart to God with greater purity, and gains us the help of the saints.

But moreover, it humbles the mind of man, fortifies his faith, supports his hope, perfects his charity, makes him diffident of himself, and causes him to put all his confidence in God. It also diminishes the terrors of death, by taking from us that servile fear which arises from self-love, and occasions us so much trouble in that last moment. For he that resigns himself entirely to God, desires nothing more, and seeks nothing but the execution of the Divine Will. He renounces every thing that he has ever loved against God or besides God: his only fear in that most dreadful hour is, lest there should be any thing between God and him; because he loves nothing but the supreme goodness. He casts himself into that immense ocean of mercy, and thinks on nothing but being cast into the arms of Christ, in whom alone he can find true life.

Thus a loving resignation of ourselves into the hands of God, joined to a lively faith, and an humble confidence in our Saviour's merits, contains what is necessary for dying holily: and this disposition is wholly included in the words of Christ at his death: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* For this word, *father*, is a word of love and tenderness; *I commend*, is a word of confidence and resignation; *my spirit*, that is, my soul, my life, and consequently

consequently every thing that I have most dear; *into thy hands* into those Divine Hands which faith teaches me are full of mercy, which can supply all my defects, and make me deserve the blessings they offer me.

From whence we may also conclude, that those who out of duty or charity, assist their neighbour at death, can do nothing better, than exhort him after an exact confession of his sins, to forget himself, and neither to think on the punishments he has deserved, nor the state wherein he shall be found after death; but to resign himself to God with all his heart, as to *health* or *sickness*, as to *life* or *death*, and as to *time* or *eternity*, without desiring any thing else; but that the Divine Majesty may be glorified, after such a manner as he pleases in his creature. There is no better means of dying christianly, and of securing our eternal salvation.

V. When our Saviour had expired, the sun recovered its pristine lustre, the heavens became serene, and there happened many other things which clearly shewed that he who had died, was not an ordinary man. The Ark of the Covenant and the Tables of the Law were kept in the temple of *Jerusalem*. The place wherein they were put was covered with a veil, and no person entered therein but the high-priest, and even he did it but with a great many ceremonies. The veil of the temple denoted, that what was contained in the law of *Moses*, had been till then veiled, obscure, mysterious, and was but the figure of the true *Messias*, and of the new law. But in order to make us comprehend that the figures were accomplished, that the truth was discovered, and that the time was come, wherein Christ was to be adored by all nations; when he died on the Cross, *the veil of the temple was rent in two, from the top even to the bottom*; and what had been hidden for so many ages, was then exposed to the eyes of the whole world. There ended the *law of fear*, which did but make *slaves*; and then was confirmed the *law of love*, which was for *the children*.

VI. The Centurion, who with a troop of soldiers guarded our Saviour, having heard the loud cry he sent forth at his death, and which appeared above human strength, openly confessed the Divinity of Christ, saying: *he was indeed the Son of God*, Matt. xxvii. 51, 54. Many even of those that had loaded him with affronts and maledictions, seeing the earth quake, the sun darkened, and hearing our Saviour cry out with greater force, than if he had been in perfect health; *returned knocking their breasts*, Luke xxiii. 43. touched with regret for their fault. They then called to mind his former miracles; praised his Doctrine; blamed the cruelty and injustice of those

those that had put him to death; wished for his presence and conversation, which had seemed so sweet to them; acknowledged the innocence of that unspotted Lamb; the virtue of his Blood began to soften their hearts; and they judged him more holy than the Priests and Pharisees, who by a false zeal of religion, had delivered him up unto death.

O ye imitators of the crucified Jesus! support with constancy the honour of your Master; and shew to the whole world, and to your persecutors, that by carrying the Cross, for his love, ye triumph with him over your own enemies and his.

CONTEMPLATION

On Christ dying.

○ Good shepherd! now is the hour, when, according to thy word, thou art to *lay down thy life for thy sheep*. Thou hast also said, that *greater love than this no one hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends*; but is it necessary therefore that thou shouldst die? Live, O thou true friend of my soul! thou hast already given me too certain proofs of thy love; and I am very well persuaded and convinced thereof, *John x. 15. xv. 13.*

But how comes it that death presumes to approach to thee, who art the fountain of life? How canst thou depart from this world, and leave me in it? How can I remain without thee, O my only consolation?

If thou art resolved to suffer the agony of death, and to maintain that last combat, then descend from the Cross, come into my arms, where thou shalt die more sweetly: I ought also to bid thee adieu, by embracing thee for the last time; and thou oughtest to give me thy blessing, before thou leavest me. Then thou shalt either carry my heart with thee, or else leave thy spirit with me. I will close thy eyes, and will die for love of thee, after having seen thee die for love of me.

The

The pains thou endurest in that state, O my God! are excessive. Thy precious body become heavy by its own weakness, supports itself only upon the nails which fasten it to the cross. The wounds of thy hands and feet are enlarged, and augment thy pains every moment. Why dost thou not at least take a little repose? Why dost thou not take thy breath some time before thou diest? Wilt thou then be tormented without intermission, until thy last gasp? O constant love! O invincible patience! O incredible perseverance!

II. What a noble example dost thou give me, O my Saviour! I follow it from henceforth, and remain close to the foot of the cross, there to bewail, in the bitterness of my soul, both for thy death and my sins which have been the cause of it. But I know not, O most holy Soul of Jesus; whether I ought to desire thee to depart quickly out of thy body, or remain still therein. If thou departest from it, thou takest away my life; and if thou remainest in it, thou cruelly tormentest that innocent Lamb. Transport into me all the pains which it suffers, and do afterwards what thou pleasest.

O charitable Father! who hast adopted me by such great labours, say for an adieu to my soul some word of life, the remembrance of which it may never lose. Give me thy blessing, since thou wilt depart from me.

O Jesus, thou love of my soul! is it possible the light of my eyes should not abandon me? How can I see without dying, that body become cold by the approach of death? Since thou hast not the strength to hold up thy head, but bowest it down towards me, open thy eyes once more, and look upon me with mercy. Penetrate my heart with the sweet light which proceeds from those dying eyes, and fill it with thy love. For how can I live, after having seen thee die, if thou leavest me not in thy love, to comfort me for thy death!

III. O merciful Father! O amiable Spouse of my soul! O faithful Companion of its pains! if I be without thee, I shall be without a father, without a friend, without a master, without a spouse, and without a comforter. Thou wilt then die, O my Saviour! and I cannot oppose what thou willest; at least abandon me not by dying, since thou diest for me. But if thou diest for me, if it be the love thou bearest this miserable sinner, which reduces thee to the mortal agony wherein I see thee, canst thou, O Lord! refuse me, in this last moment, what I shall beg of thee?

Thou

Thou hast already made thy will; thou remittest thy soul into the hands of thy Father; leavest thy body in the grave; carriest thy riches along with thee; and hast nothing more to give but thy cross. Leave me *that Cross*, O my Lord and my Father! let it be my portion, and a certain token of thy love. I receive it, embrace it, will live upon it, and die fastened thereto.

Pardon me, O my God! all the sins I have committed. After having done, suffered, and prayed so much for me during thy life, wilt thou refuse me at thy death the pardon I beg of thee? I confess in thy presence, O Lord! at the foot of thy cross, and in the sight of thy most precious blood; that as an unnatural child, I have sinned against thee, O Father full of all goodness! as a faithless servant, I have served thee ill, O thou best of all masters! and as a negligent and ungrateful friend, I have abandoned thee, O thou true friend of my soul!

Look upon me in this moment when thou art going to leave me, and hear the prayer I make thee. I beg thy cross of thee, O my Saviour! to comfort me in thy absence; thy love, to sigh continually after thee; and a fountain of tears, to weep night and day for the misfortune of having offended thee. Yes, O my God! *thy cross, thy love, and my tears*, must be, for the short time that remains for me to live, the common food of my soul.

Ah, my Jesus! I behold the paleness of death in thy face, thy eyes are become dim, thy soul is on thy lips, thou expiest.

Here it is, O my soul! that being wholly intent on the moment of the death of thy Saviour and spouse, thou oughtest to embrace him tenderly, to receive his last breath, to remain united to him, and absorbed in him. If words are wanting with thee, be not afflicted thereat; it is no longer time to speak, keep silence, enter into a profound recollection, and content thyself with saying: O my Saviour! O my Jesus! O my love! either let me die with thee, or live in me for ever.

IV. Depart then, O sweet Jesus: since thou wilt: depart, my only hope! rest thyself after so many labours, and finish the time of thy exile. Depart, and give to the good thief what thou hast promised him: receive his soul, as the first fruits of the product of thy cross, as the pledge of the salvation of mankind; and let him take possession of thy kingdom in the name of all sinners.

Descend

Descend into hell, O Divine Comforter! break the gates of those obscure dens, enlighten the darkness thereof, shew thyself to those holy souls, who have sighed after thee for so many ages, satisfy their desires, and render them happy by thy presence. Return afterwards to thy Father that calls thee; destroy by thy death the fears of ours, let it become sweet to us, since it is thereby that we must come to thee.

Depart, O King of glory! open that way till now shut up, unknown and inaccessible to all men; but delay not thy return, hasten thy resurrection, shorten the time of the three days and three nights which thou art to remain *in the heart of the earth*. *That haste* shall be a new proof of thy love, and shall not prejudice the truth of thy words.

Consider the extreme sorrow wherein thou leavest me by thy departure, the hope and desire I have of seeing thee glorious, impassible, immortal, wholly resplendent with light and majesty. Rise again therefore, O Lord! by returning to life, thou wilt restore it to my soul, it will revive with thee, in order to possess thee and be possessed by thee, to be absorbed and transformed into thee, O my Jesus, my love, and my sovereign happiness!

C O N T E M P L A T I O N

On the Eternal Father, concerning these words of our Saviour:
 Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.

O Eternal Father! *father of mercies, and God of all consolation*, acknowledge the voice of my Saviour, hearken to the last words of thy Son. He has pronounced them for me, and he pronounced them at his death, that I might never lose the remembrance of them, that they might remain engraven in the bottom of my heart, that I might pronounce them at the hour of my death, and that thou mayest receive my spirit, as thou didst receive his.

How

How conformable are these words to those he promised in his infancy: he said then: *Did you not know, that I must be employed about the things that are my Father's?* Luke ii. 49. He was obedient unto death, had thy will continually before his eyes, and also resigned himself to it at his death. That obedience is the source of my happiness: those words are my riches, my light, my consolation, and my cure; because by seeing my Saviour thus remit his spirit into thy hands, I discover that those hands are full of grace and mercy; that it is to them I ought to have recourse in all my necessities, pains, and dangers; and that I shall find in them every thing that is necessary for me. That divine master has told us, that *where he is, there shall his servants be.* Is it not for that reason he throws himself into thy hands, O Eternal Father! that we may throw ourselves therein after him, seek him there, and find him there?

II. If those powerful hands restrain me not, O my God! if they suffer me to wander among creatures, what shall become of me? I shall be miserable, abandoned, a vagabond, and always in danger of losing myself. But if they protect me, if they support me, I shall fear nothing, and nothing shall be wanting to me. Hear then, O heavenly Father! the words of thy Son. Receive me by him, and with him, into thy divine hands. I know how unworthy I am thereof, but I also know very well that he has acquired me by his obedience and death, what I cannot merit of myself. Thus I presume after him, O my Father and Lord! to commend my spirit, soul, body, senses, and powers into thy hands. I put my sins also into them, that thou mayest pardon me them; my wounds, that thou mayest heal them; my blindness, that thou mayest enlighten it; and my tepidity, that thou mayest inflame it.

I throw myself entirely into them, such as I am, and such as thou knowest me, that is, weak, inconstant, poor, naked, deprived of all good, capable of all evil, and more miserable still a thousand times than I can imagine. I cast into them my thoughts, views, designs, affections, consolations, and pains, all I am, all I hope for, all I fear, and all that can befall me.

Receive me into thy hands, by those of thy Son. May those divine hands conduct me according to thy will; may they refer to thy glory all that is in me; may I acknowledge those hands in every thing I see, and in every thing I suffer; may I kiss them, and adore them, even when they strike me; may I retire therein, dwell therein, and repose therein.

III. O Divine

III. O Divine Hands! that created Heaven and Earth for me, and created me for you, permit me never to depart from your conduct. In you it is I shall find my Saviour's spirit, consequently my repose, my happiness, and my true life. But since it is by those hands I subsist, O my God! and since they have given me my being, may I expect and receive also from them all my goods on earth, and may they crown me at last in heaven.

O beautiful cross, ennobled by the blood and death of my Saviour! more brilliant than the stars of heaven, and more precious than all earthly riches, thou art the end of his labours and banishment, the beginning of his glory, his field of battle, the trophy of his victory, and the chariot of his triumph. But thou art also my portion, inheritance, and the succession which the Lord has left me. He died in thy arms poor, naked, deprived of all, and content with possessing thee alone.

I reverence thee, O *precious Cross*! I embrace thee, and regard thee as my treasure and only relief. Thou art the support of my weakness, the terror of my enemies, and the foundation of my hopes. The heavens already acknowledge thee, the world reveres thee, hell fears thee, and the devil knows that he who has expired on thee, is the true Son of God. Thou art my crown, my glory, and my riches; and all the goods I possess and expect, come to me by thee.

Thou art no longer what thou wast formerly; thou hast lost thy ancient rigour, art become a light burthen, an agreeable yoke, a source of glory, and the asylum, strength, and repose of all those that throw themselves into thy arms. I reverence thee, O Tree of Life! I reverence thee, O Source of Wisdom! I reverence thee, O Furnace of Love! Receive me into thy arms, support me, and sanctify me. May he that died on thee for love of me, that has redeemed me by thee, also receive me by thee.

O most holy Mother of God! Queen of Angels, Star of the Sea, and Refuge of Sinners! you who with an extreme pain beheld him die to whom you gave life, and who expected with a firm faith, and certain hope, the moment of his resurrection; obtain that I may be crucified with him; that he may receive me into

into the number of his servants; and that I may die, live, and reign with him. O ye Saints of Heaven! who this day contemplate on that divine, glorious, impassible, and immortal Lamb, and who possess him with assurance never to lose him, look down upon me, have compassion on this poor and exiled person, obtain me the grace of being crucified on earth with Christ, and of being crowned by him in heaven. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

